



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Warm and sunny

40p (IR 45p)

MEDIA+

RADIO 5: WINNING THE BREAKFAST BATTLE
WITH PAGES OF APPOINTMENTS

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PAGES OF SPORT

The deadly meaning of running amok



Richard Lloyd Parry was the only British reporter to witness Indonesia's latest whirlwind of violence in Banjarmasin

As far as I can make out through the hulking pieces of transparent plastic and the files trapped underneath, there is a single corpse lying on the table. The mortuary attendant says that is wrong, and tells me to look again. There is one clearly visible skull, scorched down to the bone and cracked from side to side by the intense heat, but there are four charred arms, and at least three of what might be feet.

These sticky black lumps, heaped together on a metal table, once belonged to two men, the doctors believe they were in their late twenties. But even they are having difficulty separating one from the other. Since they were scooped out yesterday from the remains of a burned-out department store, 20 people have come to see the corpses, none of them have been able to identify them as missing relatives.

There are at least 132 similar bodies in Banjarmasin, burned beyond recognition in the worst electoral violence Indonesia has seen since President Suharto came to power 32 years ago. In the four-storey Mitra Plaza shopping centre, 70 corpses were found huddled in a single spot where they had clustered in a last attempt to escape the flames and smoke. "By the time they realised that their friends had started the fire on the ground, it was too late," said a police officer who believed that they had all been lookers. "They can't use the escalators, because they are burning. They can't get through the windows, because the glass is 10 millimetres thick. Their faces are gone, their ID cards are burned. They will never be identified."

The English expression "run amok" comes from Malay. In this regional city on the southern tip of Borneo, the phrase has vindicated its origins. Banjarmasin, capital of Indonesia's South Kalimantan province, was always a haphazard town. But yesterday, 48 hours after the riots on Friday evening, it looked as if it has been hit by an earthquake. Three shopping centres, one hotel, and the offices of the ruling party have been burned out. One Protestant church has been razed, and the Catholic damaged. A city block, including a school and a *kampung*, a poor settlement which housed 500 families, has been reduced to ashes. In the city centre, virtually no window remains unbroken.

Apart from the 134 confirmed dead, rumours are already circulating that the armed forces carried out summary executions as it mopped up afterwards. And yet, even as the last of the fires are extinguished, and the scale of the damage and casualties becomes clear, nobody seems able to answer the fundamental question: why did this happen, and what does it indicate Indonesia as a whole?

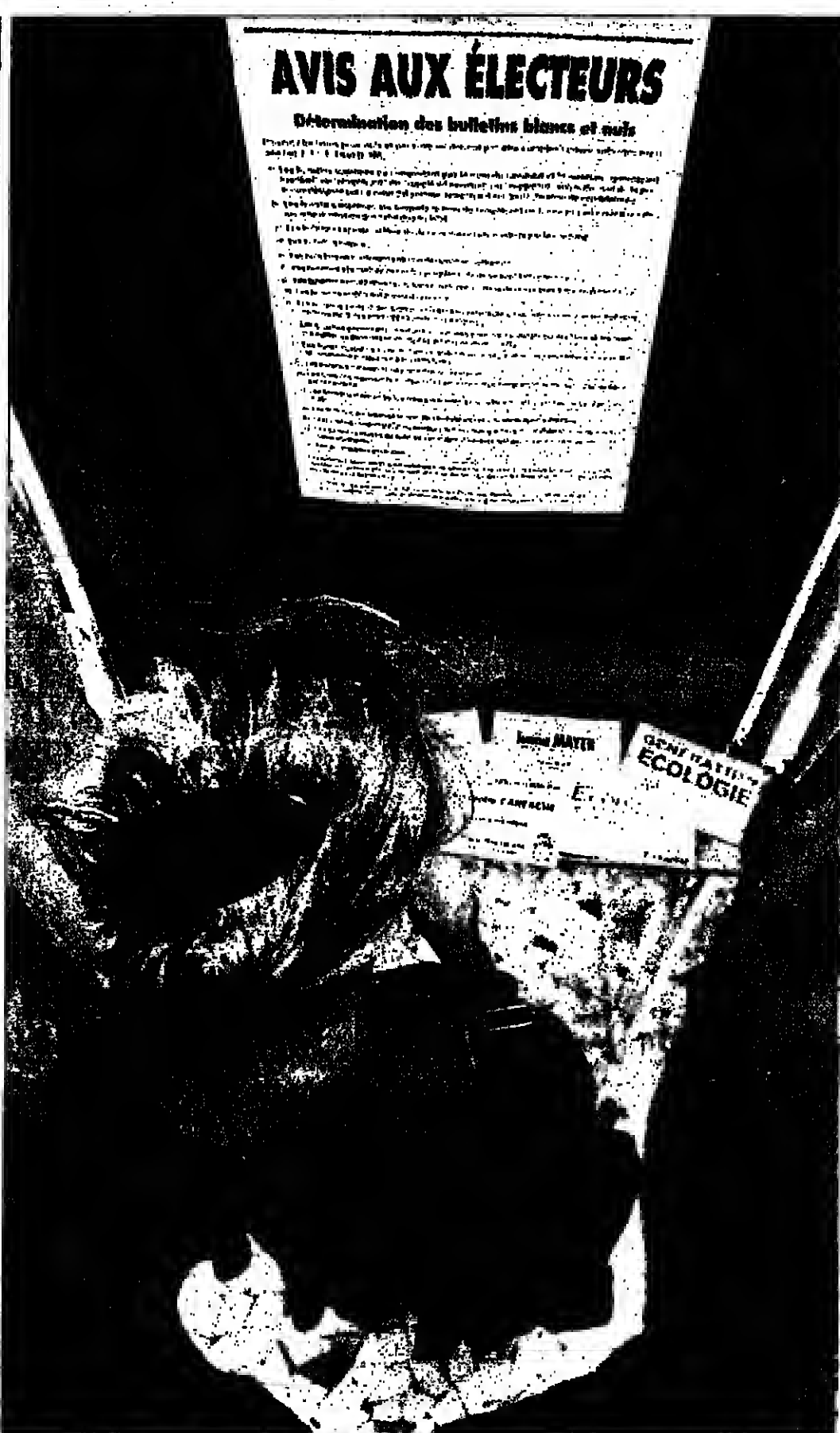
On the face of it, the answer is simple. Friday was the last day of the campaign period for Indonesia's general election which takes place across the archipelago on Thursday. It was the turn of Golkar, the ruling party of President Suharto, to campaign in Kalimantan, and in Banjarmasin, spirits were high among its activists who drove around the town on motorbikes, dressed in the party's yellow colours.

According to eyewitnesses, their jubilation disturbed the morning prayers of Muslims, including supporters of the rival United Development Party (PPP), who formed a rival mob. It began accosting the Golkar supporters, and forcing them to take off their yellow T-shirts, and make the PPP's one-fingered salute. Even women were stripped to their underwear, and a 13-year-old boy named had his wrist broken for wearing a Golkar T-shirt. "Somebody gave it to him that morning," said his father. "What does he know about politics? He just wanted to wear his new shirt."

The mob smashed the windows of the Catholic cathedral, and set fire to the city's most expensive hotel, the Kalimantan. The Golkar office was next, and then a Protestant church, which in turn ignited the *kampung* behind it. At 6.30 pm a cinema and department store caught fire. At 9.30 the crowd, estimated at tens of thousands, reached the Mitra Plaza, mated at tens of thousands, 131 of them never left, which they began looting.

There are sectarian, economic and political strands to the conflict, but none on its own is adequate to explain the nature of the violence. The destruction of the churches clearly expressed the anger of Muslims with the Christian majority - but many of those who suffered the most on Friday were Muslim. Many of the buildings that were burned were symbols of wealth and unattainable affluence - but the Protestant church and the *kampung* behind belonged to the poor. In one sense, it was a battle between Golkar and the PPP - but politics was the last thing on the minds of the looters. The election, as Indonesians well understand, is in any case a sham, a mere rubber-stamp for another five years of Golkar rule.

Banjarmasin has never seen anything like this before. The city, after all, experienced only the worst of several unconnected riots in cities all over Indonesia, including the capital, Jakarta. Perhaps the best explanation is the most general. "This was just an opportunity," said a tour guide. "The people cannot be patient any more in waiting for democracy. They did this because they were capable of doing it."



Making a mark: A French woman casting her vote yesterday

Photograph: AFP

Socialist upset in France

John Lichfield
Paris

The French parliamentary election was left on a knife's edge last night after an unexpectedly poor performance by the centre-right government in the first round.

Although predictions for the second round next Sunday were hazardous, the possibility could not be excluded of a left wing government for the next five years, in cohabitation with the centre-right President Jacques Chirac. Such an outcome would throw the European single currency programme into doubt.

Left-wing parties scored a total of 40.7 per cent in the first round, according to computer projections. The traditional right scored a disappointing 36.7 per cent.

In the second round next Sunday, all will depend on the National Front, which was projected to score 15 per cent in the first round, a record for a parliamentary election.

Fast-talkin' play this, ain't it?

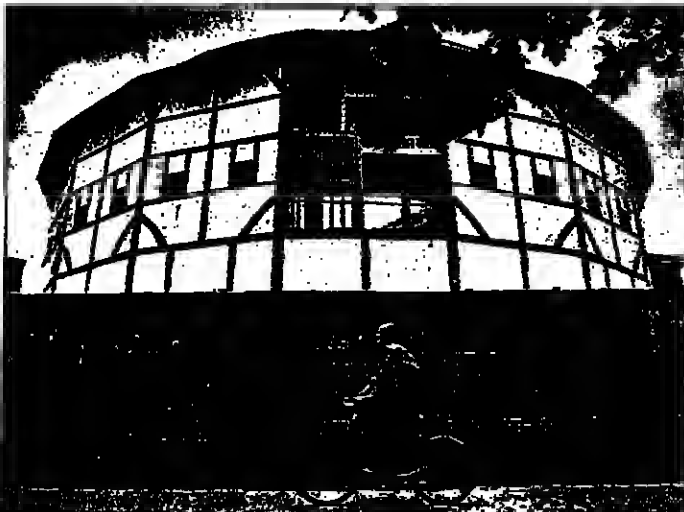
David Keys

The re-opening tomorrow of Shakespeare's Globe theatre, after a 355-year break, will mean hearing the Bard spoken at breakneck pace in original "proto-cockney". Elizabethan accents.

The theatre is also planning to revive some Elizabethan plays that have languished unperformed for the past four centuries. The original Globe, built in 1599 and partially owned by William Shakespeare, was burnt down in 1613. Its successor, Globe II, was demolished after being forcibly closed by order of Parliament at the beginning of the English Civil War in 1642. Last week Globe III was completed after 65 months of construction work.

The new Globe - an exact replica of Globe I - will alter the public's perception of Shakespeare when it opens its doors for its first presentation, *Henry V* this afternoon.

Globe III is scrapping the traditionally sedate atmosphere of 20th-century Shakespearean theatre. Instead it will revert to the Elizabethan and early Stuart audience norms of heckling and in-



The Globe: back to the future with rowdy audiences

formality. As in Shakespeare's day, snacks will be served throughout the performance - and some plays will be performed without intervals.

The actors will be wearing exact reproductions of 16th-century Elizabethan garments. The specially made costumes and props are the most accurate ever used in a

Shakespeare performance. The dyes - indigo, weld, madder and onion skin extract treated with urine and saffron - have also been specially made.

Even the actors' underwear, which the audience is unlikely to see, is made of Elizabethan-style linen. Real silver and gold thread have been used to make some of the more spectacular Elizabethan silk garments.

The theatre's chief academic adviser, Professor Andrew Gurr, says that in Shakespeare's day people probably talked faster than they do now and that the actors would have taken not much more than two hours to perform a play which today would take over three.

"To be true to the original, the actors should really speak and move a lot faster - about a third faster in fact," says Professor Gurr. "The story line would unfold more rapidly. The beauty of character, verse and situations would have to take second place to the elegance of the plot," he said.

The new theatre also hopes to re-introduce true period accents. Some future productions could be performed in "proto-cockney", says Professor Gurr.

"By analysing late 16th-century spelling idiosyncrasies we hope to learn a lot about how the words would actually have been pronounced. They certainly would not have been articulated in a standard modern middle-class accent - more a strong London regional one, as most of Shakespeare's actors were Londoners," he said.

Blair plans more open government

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Seven draft Bills will be introduced by the Government over the next 12 months, including one on freedom of information, in a move aimed at giving Parliament and the public much more say in legislative detail.

Ministers cite the mess that was made of the Child Support Agency as an example of what can go wrong with complex Bills, even when there is cross-party agreement that something needs to be done.

The publication of draft legislation means that where all-party agreement exists, consensus can be reached on the detail, with MPs and outside experts going over the fine print to ensure that "wrinkles" are ironed out well in advance.

The change is being heralded as one of a number of moves to mark an end to government "arrogance". After 18 years of Conservative rule, Tony Blair is said to be determined to use his majority to strengthen the role of Parliament, arguing that ministers are the servants, not the masters, of the people.

Ann Taylor, the new Leader of the Commons, has also told MPs that she is open to suggestions that would put an end to the gagging of Commons debate.

Ministers would like to get away from the imposition of the "guillotine" - the enforced timetable process which strictly limits the time that can be spent in debating batches of clauses in Bills. The guillotine often means that great chunks of legislation are not debated at all by Parliament. But while there has been much talk about getting rid of the device, little has been done about it because it does facilitate government business.

However, Mrs Taylor told the Commons last Thursday: "We need to consider what alternatives there might be to the guillotine imposed by the Government with a majority, and the voluntary understandings that have been tried in the past. Sometimes they have worked, sometimes not, but there is scope to see what other mechanisms

could be available to achieve better planning of legislation."

She also said: "There is scope for considering to what extent we could gain by having more Bills published in draft and, possibly, by having pre-legislative committees to examine draft Bills or White Papers."

Once such a procedure had been carried through, it should not take so long to get through to the statute book. That opens

Bills proposed in the Queen's Speech, there are now another seven drafts on the way.

They will cover not only freedom of information but also tobacco advertising, the creation of a food standards agency, pensions splitting between husband and wife, financial services, limited liability partnerships, and the control of communicable diseases.

While a concerted programme to give the Commons draft legislation will open up the parliamentary process - and soak up some of the undoubted surplus energies of the large intake of new Labour MPs - action to get rid of the guillotine would be a historic move.

According to research by the Commons library, the guillotine was first used on the Criminal Law Amendment (Ireland) Bill of 1887. The innovation was described by the minister as "absolutely essential in the interests of the honour and dignity of Parliament and the duties which are imposed upon the Members of the House of Commons ..."

"We have arrived at the fourth month of the session and we have practically done nothing except to consider the measure now before the House ... the whole course of legislation has been stopped."

While all oppositions have protested in outrage at the introduction of the guillotine, all governments have been able to point out that their critics have themselves, when in office, used it to curtail debate. Against that background of confrontation, any move to give legislation more mature consideration would mark a sea-change in the parliamentary process.



Tony Blair: 'determined to strengthen Parliament'

up the probability that a Freedom of Information Bill could be up and running by 1999, with a pre-examined Bill included in the next Queen's Speech, in November 1998.

The decision to come forward with a draft Bill on open government is a considerable shift on this month's Queen's Speech, in which the Government's official position was to publish yet another White Paper. But senior government sources have told *The Independent* that in addition to the 26

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QUICKLY
Saudi murder trial halted
The Saudi trial of two British nurses accused of murdering a colleague was dramatically halted mid-way through the evidence yesterday to give lawyers more time to consult with the victim's family.

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news

significant shorts

Grand National re-run went ahead despite bomb warning

Merseyside Police yesterday confirmed that they received an IRA coded bomb warning on the day of the Grand National re-run, but allowed the race to go ahead.

Their decision not to evacuate the 20,000 spectators was the first time a major public event was allowed to go ahead in the face of a recognised coded bomb threat. Yesterday police said they had received one threat made in a telephone call using an authenticated codeword on 7 April, the day of the re-run. "After assessing ... the information given in the telephone call, it became apparent that the threat was untrue," a spokesman said. The 150th Grand National had been cancelled two days earlier after coded warnings led to 70,000 people being evacuated from the course. After a painstaking search, police found no explosive devices.

Army accidents mar hospice fun-day

Four soldiers and a civilian were injured yesterday in two separate accidents at army displays at a hospice fun day at Ayr racecourse.

Crowds watched in horror as two privates and a member of the public were injured when a Land Rover crashed into an army parachute slide and sent it crashing to the ground. Private Andrew Nicol, who was seriously hurt in the accident, was last night in intensive care at Ayr hospital suffering severe head and abdominal injuries after falling 40 feet. Civilian Ailie McLoud, of Kilmarnock, sustained a shoulder and arm injury when he fell 10 feet from the same slide. A second soldier, who has not been named, is being treated for a minor arm injury. Hours later, an army motorcycle display team crashed shortly before 4pm leaving two soldiers injured, one seriously. The army is holding its own inquiry into the two incidents, alongside that of the Health and Safety Executive.

Explosive device found in Dundalk

Irish army experts yesterday carried out a controlled explosion on a suspect device found in the centre of Dundalk, Co Louth, close to the border with Northern Ireland.

Police sources said the incident was not regarded as a hoax and it was thought the device could have been planted by an Ulster loyalist paramilitary group. A large area of Dundalk was sealed off while police and troops worked on a package, left in an alley off the town's main street. The device was found after a call to media offices warned of bombs planted in the car park at Dublin airport and in Dundalk. Nothing was located in the airport, but searching police uncovered the Dundalk package.

Mystery illness kills baby elephant

The first female Asiatic elephant to be born and brought up in the United Kingdom died yesterday after suffering a mystery illness, Chester Zoo said. Karha, who was 17 months old, had been refusing to eat for several days.

Pat Kade, a spokeswoman for the zoo, said: "All those who knew and worked with her are very upset ... A post mortem will be held."



Last week Karha was taken to Leahurst Animal Hospital at Liverpool University after her keepers noticed she had lost her appetite. While she was there she collapsed and staff were unable to get her to her feet again. Karha became famous when 143,000 Blue Peter viewers voted to choose her name, and she was credited with bringing thousands of extra visitors to the zoo.

Glass of milk saves girl's teeth

A 15-year-old girl who had nearly all her teeth knocked out when she was in collision with a car on Friday has had them replaced, thanks to a quick-thinking paramedic who saved them in a glass of milk minutes after the accident. Staff at North Staffordshire Hospital are optimistic that her teeth will become fixed again. The girl, from Cannock, Staffordshire, also suffered a broken leg in the collision. David Turner, of the County Air Ambulance, said: "If you can preserve [teeth] like that there is a chance the doctors might be able to put them back in fairly quickly."

Police investigate cruelty allegations

Police are investigating allegations that a social services home manager abused mentally disabled people in her care.

The middle-aged woman was suspended by Solihull social services, Birmingham, last October after other staff raised concerns about her behaviour. But following complaints to police, West Midlands detectives are investigating allegations of assault and mistreatment. They are understood to include claims that residents were made to stand facing the wall, were confined to their bedrooms for long periods and that personal alarms were left off in their ears. The home, Triumph Walk, was for 17 adults with severe learning difficulties although there are only 13 in residence. Michael Hake, the social services director, said suspension did not mean any finding of wrongdoing.

New law targets young drivers

Just one motoring offence could cause young drivers to lose their licences under new legislation that takes effect next week.

Under the New Drivers Act, which comes into force on 1 June, motorists who notch up six penalty points within two years of passing their driving test could lose their licence until they take, and pass, another test.

Security guard glued to post

A security guard was taken to hospital yesterday after two men super-glued his hand to his forehead. They tied him up after crashing a car into the gates of a building site he was guarding in Braintree, Essex. The guard was rescued by a passing police dog handler. Two men are being questioned about the incident.

£12.3m lottery winner

One ticket-holder won the rollover jackpot of £12.3m on Saturday. The winning numbers were 26, 3, 23, 33, 25, 21, and the bonus number was 24.

people



Mariella Frostrup (above) is preparing a car programme for Channel 5 to rival BBC2's Top Gear presented by Jeremy Clarkson. The programme is to be launched in July. Photograph: Philip Meech

Soldier hero finds honour in Piazza Ernest Foster

It took 53 years and a touch of Italian fantasy, but Private Ernie Foster of the Fifth Hampshire Regiment, 46th Division, has finally found his place in the history books. In one narrow of Sulo, not far from the monastery of Monte Cassino - the scene of protracted fighting where Ernie struggled to break German lines in the early months of 1944 - a plaque was unveiled in a small square yesterday bearing the legend: Piazza Ernest Foster.

The honour, a small but significant gesture bestowed upon a very ordinary infantryman, has a long and complicated history stretching back to a touching act of heroism that endeared Ernie to this part of central Italy for ever. In February 1944, as the Allies struggled in vain to break the Gustav Line established by the Germans in the southern Apennines, the sorrow, 19-year-old Ernie found himself under heavy bombardment in Sulo.

From the rubble of a devastated building he heard a dying female voice imploring: "Save my child! Save

my child!" Ernie rushed over and picked up the child, a 14-month-old boy and took the trouble to deliver him to the local infirmary where the boy's father, Erasmo Lefano, gave him a golden lock of hair as a token of gratitude.

Years later, after Ernie had retired, he returned to Italy to find the child he had saved. Alessandro Lefano, it turned out, was now the village postman and the two became friends, remaining in close contact until Ernie's death in 1992.

Sulo has always had one nameless piazza, and in due course Lefano had the idea to name it after his saviour. After five years of campaigning and petitioning, he succeeded.

Yesterday the occasion was marked by a special mass in the village church, a display of folk dancing, a colourful military parade and a grand unveiling, attended by local officials, British diplomats and the widow and three children of Ernie himself.

Andrew Gumbel, Rome

Praise for moving pregnant terror suspect to hospital

A human rights organisation yesterday applauded the High Court decision to move the pregnant terrorist suspect Roisin McAisley (right) from prison to hospital.

Ms McAisley, 25, who is fighting extradition to Germany for questioning over the IRA bombing of British Army barracks in Osnabrück last June, was moved from Holloway prison to Whittington hospital, north London, on Friday. Her baby was due last Wednesday.

The Britain and Ireland Human Rights Centre in London yesterday praised the court's "sane and sensible ruling". A spokeswoman said: "Roisin will from now on receive treatment based on her medical needs rather than on spurious security grounds."

The organisation claimed the evidence compiled against her by German Federal Police, helped by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and British Military Police, was "riddled with irreconcilable discrepancies and inconsistencies".

A witness who police claim positively identified Ms McAisley as among those renting a holiday home allegedly linked to the attack denies saying any such thing.



they argue. They say that the evidence of another witness who told police she was definitely not one of the holiday home tenants was set aside and suppressed.

And they claim ferry companies have confirmed there were no sailings on a date when police say a car implicated in the attack was seen coming off the Roscove-Cork boat.

A spokeswoman said government ministers were presented with extensive dossiers next week setting out the "major evidential anomalies" in the case against Ms McAisley. This includes alibi evidence which allegedly shows she was in Northern Ireland on dates when German police state the woman they seek was in Germany.

Louise Jury

McCartney takes advice from Bennett

The superstar singers Sting and Sir Paul McCartney have turned to king of the crooners Tony Bennett for advice on how to survive in show business.

The New Yorker Bennett, 70, who came to fame in the 1950s with hits such as "Because of You", and "Cold, Cold Heart", saw his career decline in the early 1970s but came back to life again in the past five years.

Bennett won four Grammys for his acclaimed MTV Unplugged appearance and has become a cult hit with a new generation of fans.

Bennett even co-presented the MTV music awards with the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Speaking in London, Bennett said: "I

met Sting and Paul McCartney and it was so exciting because they wanted to know how I'd survived all these years. They've had great success and want it to last. They asked me 'How do you do it? How do you stay popular all these years?'

His advice? 'I just told them to have fun and enjoy themselves. It was a great treat and a great surprise to find out they respected me.'

Now he is hoping to record with them. He said: 'I'd like to do something with Sting and Paul one day. They're so good and they're very intelligent about how they go about things.'

Bennett's new album is called Tony Bennett on Holiday, a tribute to Billie Holiday.

briefing

TRANSPORT

Heathrow climbs to fourth in passenger league table

Only three airports in the world are handling more passengers than Heathrow, latest figures reveal. And a 7.9 per cent rise, to 24.1 million passenger numbers in 1996, pushed Gatwick Airport into the top 30 of world airports, says a report in *Airline Business* magazine.

Heathrow Airport, west London, handled 55.7 million passengers in 1996. This was a 3 per cent rise on the 1995 figure and enabled Heathrow to nose ahead of Dallas-Fort Worth, in Texas, in the table of leading airports based on passenger numbers.

Top of the table was Chicago's O'Hare airport, which handled 69.1 million passengers. Second was Atlanta, Georgia, which enjoyed a 9.7 per cent rise to 69.3 million passengers. Los Angeles airport, with 58.0 passengers, was third.

Business class air fares for Britons jumped 8 per cent in the first three months of 1997 and have risen 20 per cent over two years - the highest increase in Europe. But UK economy fares have risen only 5 per cent in the last two years and are significantly cheaper than anywhere else in Europe, according to an American Express European business travel index.

TECHNOLOGY

Shoppers prefer reality to Internet

Internet shopping has barely touched core household buying - and predictions about its future should be treated with scepticism, the Credit Card Research Group said in a report yesterday. By the time a critical mass of households was able to get easy access to the Internet, how it was used might have changed dramatically, the report warned. CCRG economic adviser Peter Welch, the report's co-author, said: "Shoppers show every sign of preferring the 'hands-on' experience of shopping - particularly food shopping. Mail order services had seen most Internet activity, and banking and travel could see the next take-off."

PROPERTY

House-buyers turned off by gnomes

Mirrors on the bedroom ceiling, brown bathroom suites and doorbells which play tunes are among the top turn-offs for people looking to buy a house, says a new survey.

Other definite no-nos include discovering there is a nightclub, sewage works or motorway nearby, the sight of a car on the next door and stray dogs roaming the local streets.

Results of a survey for NatWest Mortgage Services by EMRB International earlier this month of 2,012 people provided a guide to what will - and what won't - find favour, said the bank.

In Wales, mirrors on the bedroom ceiling were a particular turn-off and the garden gnome was least popular in East Angles.

What makes a des res

The features most likely to get the thumbs down	And those that keep a buyer interested
1 House painted pink	1 Quiet street
2 Nylon orange carpets	2 Gas central heating
3 Brown bathroom suite	3 Nice garden
4 Stone cladding	4 Large kitchen
5 Mirrors on the ceiling	5 Double glazing
6 "Del Boy"-style cocktail bar	6 Garage
7 Doorbell playing "Greensleeves"	7 Low council tax
8 Rusting satellite dish	8 En-suite bathroom
9 Flock wallpaper	9 Real fire
10 Garden gnomes	10 Neutral decor

EDUCATION

Medical schools lose teachers

The quality of teaching in medical schools is deteriorating as departments are forced to focus on research to win funds, it was claimed yesterday. University doctors warn that teaching posts are being cut and centres abolished - leaving a dim prospect for the patients of tomorrow. The experts blame the Research Assessment Exercise, which awards star ratings for the quality of teaching at medical centres. The results are used to determine government research funding levels. Dr Colin Smith, chairman of the British Medical Association's medical academics' committee, said universities with five-star ratings see research as the formula for continuing success, while lower scoring departments are redoubing their efforts. Clinical departments are being abolished and teaching posts cut as a result, said Dr Smith.

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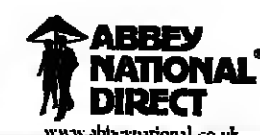
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مكتبة من الوطن

Republican army of chiffon and guns



'Leave your jewels in the bank and buy a revolver': Mollie Gill (left), a Republican prisoner held in Kilmainham jail in 1923, and the Fairview Dublin branch of Cumann na Mban, women's section, on a day's outing in 1915

Alan Murdoch
Dublin

Exhibition remembers de Valera's 'boldest and most unmanageable revolutionaries'

The picture could be of housewives on an Edwardian temperance society outing. But then there are the guns. In fact the women shown here were members of the Irish republican movement, pledged to throw off the yoke of British occupation. Rallying to the nationalist leader Countess Constance Markiewicz's call to "dress suitably in short skirts and strong boots, leave your jewels in the bank and buy a revolver", hundreds of Irish women, from shop girls to society beauties, entered a world which their own journal called "a mixture of guns and chiffon".

There was little glamour in membership of the Irish re-

publican movement circa 1916. The women were vilified by Irish newspapers who depicted them as unusually ruthless fighters who habitually shot their victims in the back.

Another publication, the *Irish Weekly Times*, reported from the General Post Office (GPO) during the Easter Rising that "the girls serving in the dining-room were dressed in the finest clothes and wore knives and pistols in their belts [and] white, orange and green sashes."

A Red Cross nurse attached to the British Army during the Rising spoke of the women's "cool and reckless courage". The republican leader Eamon de Valera himself said the

women were "at once the boldest and most unmanageable revolutionaries".

Front-line republican soldiers included the school-teacher Mary Skinnider, 23, a sniper on the roof of the Royal College of Surgeons in St Stephen's Green. She recalled: "It was dark there, full of smoke and the din of firing, but it was good to be in action... More than once I saw the man I aimed at fall." Miss Skinnider also planted a bomb in a nearby house and was later shot in three places.

In fact, even the chiffon cited by their journal was greeted less than enthusiastically by the women's leaders, who aimed to

suppress what they regarded as traditionally gentle, feminine traits.

Frothy coiffures such as the American "Gibson-Girl" top-knot and kiss-curl style were outlawed, while make-up was discouraged as something favoured by shallow English females.

Not all accepted such austerity. After one such lecture on politically correct deportment, a disbelieving working-class Dublin girl retorted to a lady superior dressed entirely in black: "Glory be to Jesus, you don't expect us to dress like you!"

The ordinary women, many still in their teens, who joined Cumann na mBan (the women's division of the Irish

Volunteers) fought side-by-side with the men. Today only a handful of junior members remain, among them 98-year-old Teresa O'Connell, one of 300 Cumann na mBan women imprisoned at Kilmainham prison in Dublin in 1923.

A comrade, Katherine "Jake" Folan, a republican courier jailed there at 15 in the cell earlier occupied by Patrick Pearse before his execution, recalled her term inside as one

of the happiest in her life. The historian Sinead McCoole argues that the republican sisterhood, having broken out of an Edwardian straitjacket that had held them in the background of public life, had a far-from secondary role.

"Men's experiences, as in the prisons, the universities of struggle, took pride of place in the public eye. But much of the political work was done by women," she says. They raised

and distributed money for prisoners' dependents from prams, held masses to focus attention on the prisoners' situation, organised highly dangerous communications and moved arms and ammunition.

Ms McCoole has now organised an exhibition at Kilmainham, re-opened as a museum, on the women and their activities.

Memorabilia on show ranges from revolvers to satin ball-

gowns, rifle badges to prison biscuits so hard they were used as doorstops. Women's republican newspapers, in which even the gardening tips carried the nationalist message, appear alongside the hand-gun Markiewicz kissed before surrendering at the 1916 Easter Rising collapsed.

An illustrated book, *Guns and Chiffon, 1916-1923* by Sinead McCoole accompanying the exhibition is available, price £5, from the Kilmainham Jail Museum, Dublin 8, Telephone Dublin (00 353 1) 4535984.

Abortion case woman strolls out to resume family life

Clare Garner

Lynne Kelly, the 14-week pregnant woman who is fighting a court battle against her estranged husband over the future of their unborn child, came out of hiding yesterday.

As she strolled in the afternoon sunshine with her parents and 18-month-old daughter, Hazel, Mrs Kelly, 21, who is being denied the right to have her pregnancy terminated, was making every effort to resume a normal life.

She fled to England when her case hit the headlines last week, but returned to her parents' home in Edinburgh late on Saturday night. Her father, John Falconer, 42, said she was "as well as can be expected", before adding: "We have decided we are not going to run away and hide and that's it. Today my family will be going about their normal business."

Mrs Kelly sought a termination 10 days ago after an acrimonious split from her husband several weeks before. When her estranged husband, James Kelly, 28, a roofer from Inverkeithing, Fife, heard about her appointment for an abortion at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, he took his case to the Court of Appeal in Edinburgh.

After losing in the Scottish courts, where four judges upheld Mrs Kelly's right to have the pregnancy terminated, Mr Kelly is now hoping to persuade the House of Lords to force his wife into having his child against her wishes. The case, unprecedented in Scottish law, will come before the Lords tomorrow at the earliest.

Meanwhile, Mrs Kelly is denied permission to go ahead with a termination - and time is running out. Unless she has the operation within the next few days, she will be into the second trimester of her pregnancy and a more complicated medical procedure will be necessary.

The estranged couple, who married in 1995, have accused



Lynne Kelly with daughter Hazel Photograph: Louise Butler/PA

each other in court of being unfit parents. Mrs Kelly, a nightclub singer, has alleged that during the two-year marriage she had to flee to a women's refuge

because of domestic violence. Mr Kelly wants custody of both the unborn child and Hazel.

Mr Falconer looked every inch the doting grandfather as

he affectionately ruffled Hazel's shock of red hair. It was, he revealed, for Hazel's sake that the family was endeavouring to resume a normal life. "She is the main reason why we have had to return. I cannot comment on why," he said.

He refused to discuss the distress of seeing his daughter's private life being laid bare in a courtroom, but said: "I have never been through anything like this before and I hope I never will again. In the fullness of time there will be a statement made about that but no comment at the moment. We don't want to prejudice our case."

Abortion and pro-life campaigners have been commenting on the case over the last week, but Mr Falconer insisted that the family did not want to be associated with either side.

The Birth Control Trust, which favours a woman's right to choose, welcomed the ruling in the Scottish courts. As far as the trust is aware, there had never been a case in Britain or the United States in which a husband had won a court order to stop an abortion going ahead.

John Smeaton, of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, said: "Above all, the right which the law should uphold is the unborn baby's right to life. A situation such as this exposes an absolute travesty of justice in that the unborn child is totally helpless and has absolutely no rights at all."

Cardinal Thomas Winning, leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, said in a statement: "There is surely an extraordinary anomaly in the law when a father can be pursued by the Child Support Agency for maintenance of a child, but has no say in protecting the child's life in the womb."

Mr Falconer refused to discuss the reasons for his daughter's abortion. He simply said: "I don't want to comment on any organisation's views for or against. We have no views on either side."

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Interlude: Entertainers chilling out at the Tribal Gathering Festival in the grounds of Luton Hoo, Bedfordshire, yesterday Photograph: Tom Pilton

Murder trial judge urges deal for nurses

Louise Jury

The Saudi trial of two British nurses accused of murdering an Australian colleague was dramatically halted yesterday to give lawyers more time to consult with the victim's family.

A judge trying Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan asked the victim's family to consider accepting a settlement rather than request the death sentence.

Under Islamic law, which is enforced in Saudi Arabia, the victim's family has the right to demand a public beheading or accept blood money.

Frank Gilford, the brother of the murder victim, Australia

Yvonne Gilford, has previously refused to waive the death penalty. Through lawyers, he insisted when the trial opened that he would not accept a monetary settlement even if the British nurses' families decided on a plea of clemency.

But judges decided to adjourn the trial for three weeks to permit further consultation with Mr Gilford, although there is still evidence to be heard.

A court official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that if they were convicted, the only way to avoid the death sentence might be an appeal from Mr Gilford for clemency.

The Salah Mejjalin law firm representing the woman said that the judge asked the victim's family "to accept as a principle that it may be possible to reach a conciliatory settlement."

Ms Parry, 41, from Alton, Hampshire, and Ms McLauchlan, 31, from Dundee, have both denied murdering 55-year-old Ms Gilford.

Her body was found on 11 December last year on the floor of her flat in the King Fahd Military medical complex in Dhahran, where all three lived and worked. Ms Gilford was reported to have been stabbed, bludgeoned and suffocated.

The latest development came on a day when the lawyers had been expected to argue that it was the brutal treatment the nurses received from Saudi police officers which led them to break down and make false

confessions. The nurses had been expected to tell the court that the confessions should not be used against them because they confessed after policemen stripped them and threatened to rape them.

Both nurses retracted their confessions soon after being charged with the murder of Ms Gilford last December and repeated the retraction, through translators, at the trial's opening session last week.

The court in Al-Khobar, eastern Saudi Arabia, sat for only an hour yesterday before adjourning.

In a statement, the defence lawyers said that the women "were concerned at the three-week delay and were impatient to be allowed... to give their account to the court."

The lawyers presented 18 pages of evidence and legal documents in the women's defence to the court yesterday.

Ms Parry and Ms McLauchlan had arrived at the four-storey courthouse in separate police vans.

They were dressed in traditional black Saudi cloaks, but were not wearing the iron shackles used at last week's hearings. A number of human rights groups had objected to the shackles.

Security around the courthouse was the tightest since the start of the trial. Undercover policemen confiscated a photographer's camera and briefly detained a reporter.



Lucille McLauchlan and (right) Deborah Parry

Jet car speeds toward record

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

The first attempts to break the land speed record by a British team this year could go ahead today.

The Thrust-SSC team, driving a car powered by two Rolls-Royce jet engines, arrived in the southern al-Jafr desert, 180 miles south-east of the Jordanian capital, Amman, last Thursday. Since then the team has been readying itself for an attempt to break the existing mark of 633.468 miles per hour.

Andrew Noble, one of the Thrust-SSC team organisers, said last week that, while the team may break the record, it will probably fail to hit its target speed of 650 mph. The car, able to generate 110,000 horsepower, is being driven by Andrew Greeo, a Royal Air Force officer. The Thrust-SSC team includes Richard Noble, who set the existing record in 1983 in Black Rock, Nevada. The Noble brothers own the new car.

Three attempts on the record at the same site last November ended after the desert tracks were submerged by flash floods – the first for five years.

But the team members are optimistic because much of the preparatory work, such as removing stones from the track, was done last year. Over the winter, various problems – including a "shimmy" which turned up at high speeds – have been fixed at the repair base in Farnborough.

However, the al-Jafr track is not long enough to allow the car to reach its top speed, said Andrew Noble last week. A record is determined by averaging the speeds of two runs, in opposite directions, which must be conducted within an hour.

Last October an American driver, Craig Breedlove, narrowly escaped disaster in the Nevada desert, when a crosswind tipped his high-speed car "Spirit of America" on its side during a test run. He escaped unhurt, and plans to try again this year.

DAILY POEM

Letter to Nature

By Alistair Elliot

Things always happen more than once in nature:
an event that is permitted will recur.

"The" Big Bang therefore must be one of a number.

The evidence of this would be left-over
bits of an earlier Bang – an "ancient" star
in "recent" space; ripples that interfere
with ours and cause "our" particles to cohere
instead of simply spreading; alien powder
that should have fallen back, caught in our sphere.

The sums will not add up, of course – Elsewhere
would send us unknown quantities of matter.
But can't we tell if ours is older or younger?

Yours sincerely

Alistair Elliot really did send this letter to the scientific weekly *Nature*, "in the tradition of Empedocles and others whose science was published in verse". He got "a nice rejection slip" in return. It finally reaches print in Elliot's new collection of poetry, *Facing Things*, published by Carcano at £6.95.

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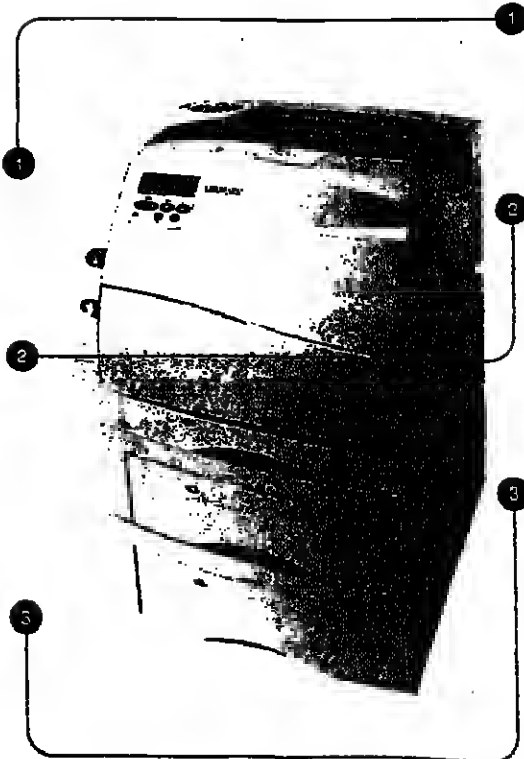
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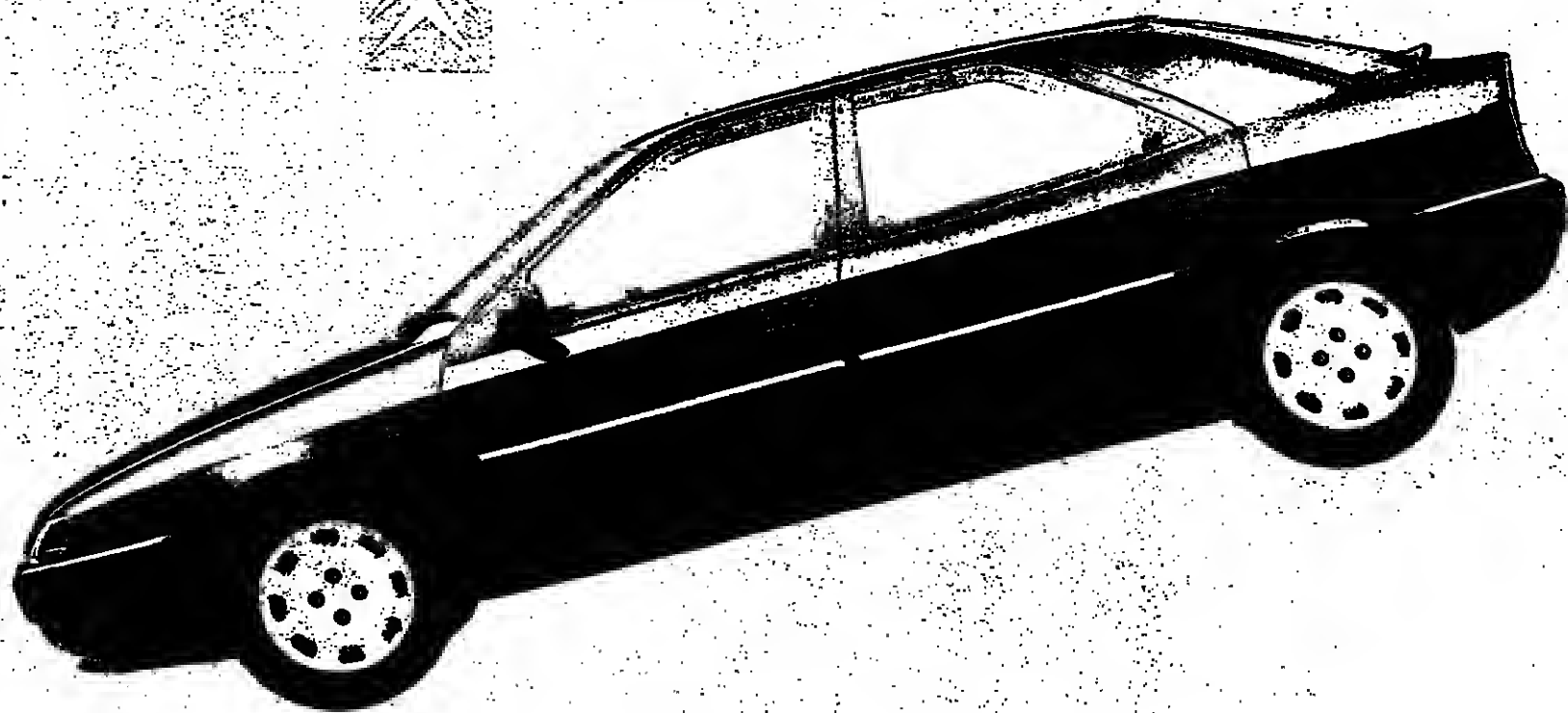
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original. Make it a perfect



High high: Crossair cabin crew posing for a recruitment advertisement (above); and an ITF protest poster (below) accusing airlines of treating female staff as 'sex objects'

Sexism row clouds blue skies

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

Airlines are being accused of pandering to male fantasies by portraying air hostesses – or female cabin crew as they prefer to be called – as sex objects.

The women are often dressed in figure-hugging uniforms, totter around on high heels, and some carriers choose women crew members for their looks as much as their abilities, it is said.

When female employees "lose their glamour" they can also lose their jobs.

While the average tired businessman may feel it is all innocent titillation and part of the lure of one airline over another, unions argue that it is sexist, demeaning and can lead to sexual harassment.

"Passengers are expected to trust and obey cabin-crew instructions in an emergency. The Barbie [doll] image, which implies little intelligence but lots of sex appeal, endangers that relationship. It undermines women's dignity and damages airline safety," according to the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

In one case outlined by the federation, a passenger pinched an attendant's bottom on numerous occasions as she was passing his seat, touched her breasts while she was serving him and later stood up behind her, grasped her by the hips and simulated sexual intercourse.

"His fellow passengers cheered him on his actions," according to federation officials.

The federation, which represents 480 transport unions with more than five million members, believes that all airlines at one time or another have sought to exploit the notion that air travel includes being served by a physically attractive "hostess".

It also points out that there are few women cabin crew members who haven't at some time suffered some form of touching, verbal insinuation,

"sexual power play", or even assault from a passenger.

Singapore Airlines is one of many carriers whose promotional material is cited by the federation for allegedly demeaning female cabin crew.

Stuart Howard, ITF aviation secretary, said: "Their promotional material is full of soft-focus, curvy, Singapore girls. It's all about the magic of the Oriental woman."

Some smaller companies are far worse, with one Brazilian airline carrying explicitly sexual cartoons in in-flight magazines.

The Swiss-based carrier Crossair has come in for ITF criticism for campaigns such as the one above emphasising the attractiveness of its female staff.

The airline employs only women and sets a retirement age of 35, according to Mr Howard.

Even British Airways, which is said to have a relatively good record, is accused of exploiting the femininity of staff. One advertisement shows a business passenger metamorphosing into

a baby with a woman in twinset and pearls holding him. The federation says that emphasising the supposed maternal instincts of female cabin crew undermines their role in air safety.

The federation is to grade airlines around the world in terms of sexism – or a lack of it – and examples of good and bad employers are to be publicised by the end of the year.

The big airlines believe accusations of sexism are wide of the mark. Singapore Airlines says that the "Singapore girl" theme, "epitomises the airline's service on the ground and in the air and symbolises the standards all our employees aspire to".

The carrier valued all its staff equally, both men and women.

A spokesman for British Airways said that employing staff because they were "pretty" was an archaic and sexist approach not adopted by BA. The "woman with the baby" advertisement was simply to convey "memories of motherhood".

Mr Kline said that the issue was not just a local one because the amount of money in fund-holding savings was virtually equal to the £100m sum the Government has vowed to find through cutting bureaucracy. During 1994-95, the Audit Commission, the public spending watchdog, noted £95m of such "savings".

Mr Kline said that the Government regarded health visitors as key workers in areas such as child protection and working with the elderly. "They are the corner-stone of preventative health care."

Yet instead of being spent on such posts, money was going on buildings which, in effect, acted as a deferred pension for the GPs.

A spokeswoman for Avon Health Authority said that the authority had a duty to ensure that money was being spent properly and had asked the doctors to look again at their plans. One of Avon's suggestions is that the partners should provide more of the funding for the development from their own resources.

The authority estimates that if the practice were to rent its premises, it would cost in the region of £39,000. It believes this notional rent should be taken into account in the budgeting of the development.

Although this has not been done before, the authority notes that "had there been profit elements in past schemes it is unlikely that they would have been on the scale of this particular development".

The money was saved from the drugs budget over four years. However, the practice's patterns of prescribing are similar to those of other surgeries.

No one from the practice was available for comment.

GPs' £513,000 expansion raises fear over profits

Louise Jury

A GP fund-holding practice has saved more than £500,000 from its drugs budget and wants to use it to develop a new surgery. But Avon Health Authority has blocked the plan, saying that it would create a "substantial profit to the practice" because of the GPs' ownership of the equity of the premises.

The case has caused particular concern because of a recent attempt by the practice to cut the number of its health visitors from two to one.

The authority has told Dr Roger Rolls and his partners in Bath to suspend plans for a satellite practice in nearby Bathampton, and wants further talks.

The authority had given earlier permission for a smaller £280,000 development but was surprised to discover that the plans had been expanded, without permission, to what it described as a "very substantial" £513,000 scheme.

In agenda papers, John Watson, the authority's development director, reported the audit sub-committee's view that the practice should not make a profit out of the development. "It is implicit within fund-holding that the scheme should not work in such a way as to provide those participating with a personal profit," he said.

The Manufacturing Science and Finance union (MSF) said that the proposal raised serious questions about the amount of National Health Service money now held, unused, by fund-holders. Roger Kline, MSF national secretary (health), said: "Where has this money come from? Was the practice over-funded or is it because they have saved on patient services?"



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Tory Euro bickering focuses on Clarke

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The Conservatives yesterday continued their bickering over the future direction of the party, with Kenneth Clarke at the centre of a debate over Europe.

Lord Parkinson, the Thatcherite former chairman of the party, told GMTV's *Sunday programme* that Mr Clarke had "offended a broad swath of the party by his rather cavalier attitude to people whose views don't agree with his, particularly on the subject of Europe."

"And there is a feeling that he held the last government to ransom - a feeling that is widely held, and that may at the end of the day count against him. I don't think he should be leader."

But Sir Leon Brittan, vice-president of the European Commission and a former Tory cabinet minister, told the same programme: "There's not the slightest evidence, and it's untrue, that Ken Clarke lost the election for the Conservatives."

He said: "If during that election we'd focused entirely on the economy, we'd have done very much better than we did focusing on the whole question of Europe."

Mr Clarke, he said, had done a tremendous job as Chancellor and it was "farfetched" to suggest, as Lord Parkinson had done, that he would be too old to be

prime minister in five years' time, when he would be 61.

"He has got tremendous flexibility of approach. He has the stature, the experience, and the common touch and those are a pretty formidable set of combinations," Sir Leon said.

It also emerged yesterday that Mr Clarke might yet look forward to an endorsement by Michael Heseltine, though the open support of John Major is more unlikely.

But many Conservative MPs still doubt whether Mr Clarke can come through to win. Like John MacGregor, contender in last week's election for the backbench 1922 Committee chairmanship, Mr Clarke is expected to be ahead on the first ballot - but with insufficient votes to establish a momentum for further rounds. If he cannot then pick up support from other

challengers for the leadership, winning the necessary 83-vote majority of the MPs who are entitled to vote, MPs will quickly begin to switch to other candidates, such as William Hague or the dark-horse contender, Peter Lilley.

Mr Clarke's campaign was yesterday boosted by the public endorsement of Sir Bryan Nicholson, former president of the Confederation of British Industry. In a letter to selected Tory MPs, Sir Bryan warned that choosing a right-wing Euro-

sceptic as leader would damage the party's relations with the business community and risk a long stay in opposition.

With Mr Clarke being seen as the Tory version of Denis Healey, Labour's former Chancellor, Sir Bryan cautioned Tory MPs against taking the "Michael Foot option" of abandoning the centre ground, as Labour had done after its defeat in 1979.

The problem with such endorsements is that Sir Bryan has no vote, and limited influence on MPs who will form their own judgements.

But for those wanting a mix of Mr Clarke's left-wing background and a dash of Euro-scepticism, Stephen Dorrell yesterday offered the prospect of outright opposition to British membership of the European single currency, with the possibility of a wide drawal of the party whip from rebels who broke party ranks to support membership.

With Mr Clarke being seen as the Tory version of Denis Healey, Labour's former Chancellor, Sir Bryan cautioned Tory MPs against taking the "Michael Foot option" of abandoning the centre ground, as Labour had done after its defeat in 1979.

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All-boy cast finds play sheds light on what it means to be a woman

Louise Jury

The play *More Light* tells the story of 16 women immured alive with the body of their deceased emperor. So there were a few gasps of surprise when John Lonsdale told his cast of 25 at Sandbach Boys Comprehensive that they were going to perform it - with not a female in sight.

Yet the result has been a roaring success which has won the school a place on stage at the National Theatre in London in a competition backed by British Telecom to the tune of £400,000.

A dozen playwrights, including Wole Soyinka and Liz Lochhead, were commissioned to write new works specially for young people. Nearly 150 youth theatre companies chose one of them to perform and one production of each has been selected for the showcase at the National on South Bank in July.

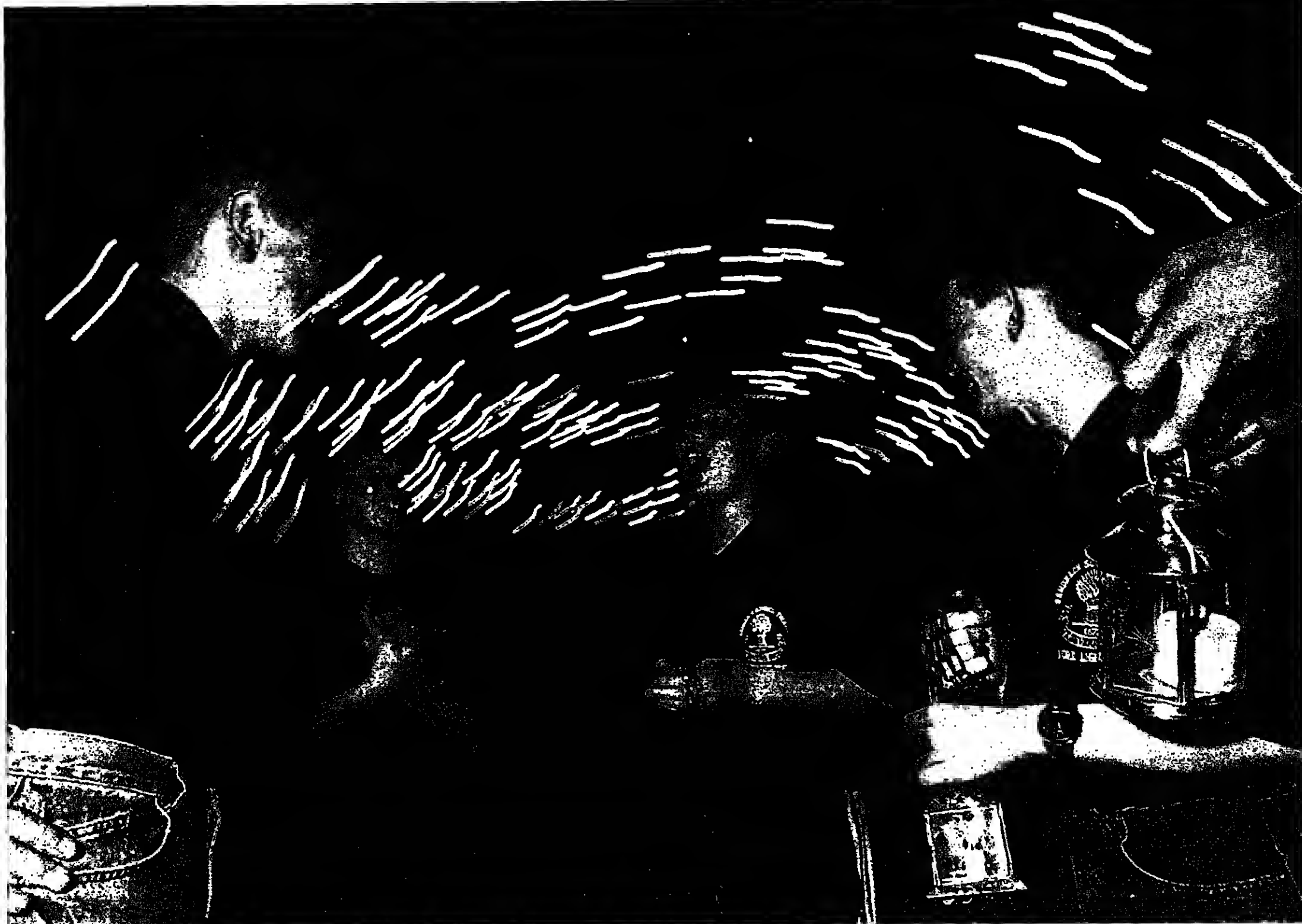
Mr Lonsdale, Sandbach's deputy head, originally shied away from Bryony Lavery's play *More Light* because it was for an all-women cast. But as he perused the scripts he had to choose from, he realised it would not be as inappropriate as he first thought.

Adopting the distinctive style of the Peking Opera, which is performed by men only, the boys were soon won over to the story of women forced to adapt to their tomb home. They respond to necessity by consuming the emperor's body.

Mr Lonsdale said that there were a few giggles in early rehearsals, but they were quickly overcome. "It's been a wonderful learning experience," he said. "What we said in entering [the competition] was whatever we did, we were prepared to take risks. I was staggered by how the boys adapted."

One of the cast, Rob Cox, 17, said that playing a concubine was certainly challenging, but had been very interesting. "It's nothing like we've tried before. It's been wonderful."

David Critchley, 14, who plays



Gender hopping: Members of the *More Light* cast from Sandbach Boys Comprehensive in Cheshire rehearsing at the Crucible in Sheffield

Photograph: Joan Russell/Gazette

Pure Joy, another of the women in the play, said he was "gobsmacked" when he was first told what they were to do. "I wondered what they had chosen. But I really enjoyed it. I just like the difference of it -

acting as a woman and being a woman."

Suzi Graham-Adriani, the National Theatre's youth theatre projects producer, said the scheme, called BT National Connections,

was a first. "Up to now you could count on the fingers of one hand plays written for young performers," she said.

"Adult writers don't automatically write for young performers. But the

idea is that this is encouraging young people to have an active interest in theatre by having good scripts to work with. It's making theatre as high-profile and sexy as we can."

Ms Lavery said she was very

pleased Sandbach had found a way to perform her play.

"It's a very coherent production and really moving and lovely," she said.

"The play has had a hammering

because it's about sex and death and all those things, but I'm absolutely convinced young people need serious work. They work their socks off with huge amount of energy and produce beautiful acting."

Sarwar denies new 'bribe' claim

Clare Garner

The Mohammed Sarwar saga took a new twist yesterday as a Sunday newspaper published fresh evidence for the allegation that the Labour MP for Glasgow Govan paid an election rival a £5,000 bribe.

Mr Sarwar's lawyers later released a statement saying that Tariq Malik, the witness quoted in the *News of the World* story, had sworn an affidavit denying speaking to a newspaper.

The *News of the World*, which is already being sued by Mr Sarwar for £750,000 over the original report, is standing by yesterday's story. Mr Malik, the third man in the Mr Sarwar's Mercedes when the MP allegedly handed over the money to Badar Islam, is quoted as saying that he saw Mr Sarwar pass £5,000 to Mr Islam, an election rival.

Mr Malik, 46, the election agent of Mr Islam, allegedly told the newspaper: "The moment I saw the money I knew it was corrupt and illegal. I was stunned,

frightened and very concerned about what was happening, and I knew it was wrong."

At a news conference in Glasgow, Chris Kelly, of the lawyers Hughes Dowdall, who are acting for Mr Sarwar, Britain's first Muslim MP, said last night: "Today the *News of the World* published further defamatory material concerning Mohammed Sarwar."

"The allegations made depended heavily on statements attributed to Mr Tariq Malik, the election agent of Badar Islam. Tariq Malik has today sworn an affidavit before a notary public in which he denies making to the *News of the World* any of the statements attributed to him by that newspaper."

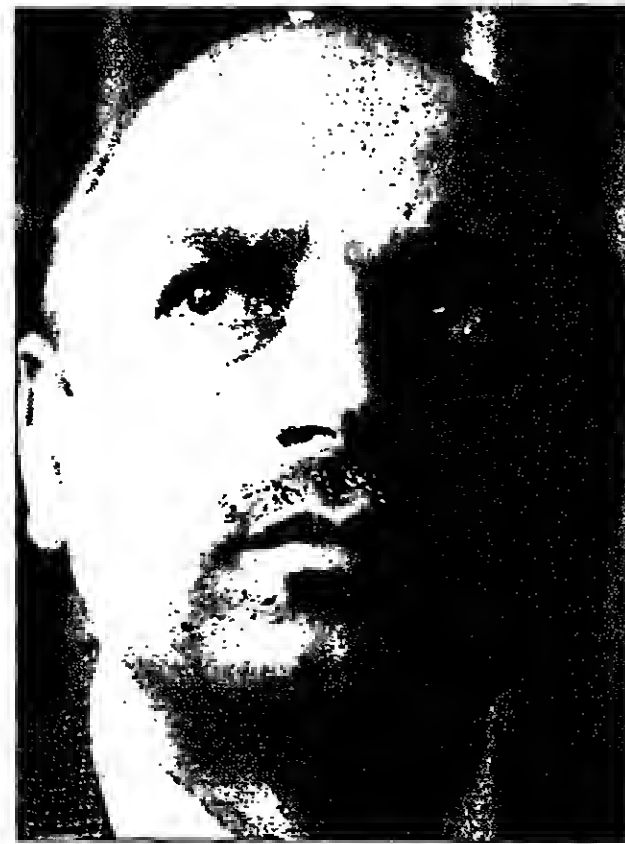
Mr Kelly, accompanied by Mr Sarwar who remained silent throughout, continued: "In the affidavit, he also asserts that he was present as a witness at the meetings which took place between Mohammed Sarwar and Badar Islam and he affirms his belief in Sarwar's innocence of the allegations made against him."

Mr Sarwar said nothing during the news conference and would not answer questions from journalists. Mr Kelly did not produce a copy of the affidavit and did not elaborate on his statement.

Last night, the *News of the World* said: "We stand by everything that we have printed, and in particular today's leader column. We will see you in court, Mr Sarwar."

Last Friday, Mr Sarwar's lawyers launched a defamation action in the Court of Sessions against the publishers of the *News of the World*. This concerns the paper's original story on 18 May, in which it claimed that Mr Sarwar had paid an election rival - Mr Islam - £5,000 to run a losing campaign. Mr Kelly said the allegations in today's edition of the *NotW* will be referred to in the action already launched.

Meanwhile, Gordon Guthrie, who ran Mr Sarwar's election campaign, became the first Labour figure publicly to condemn the MP. "Sarwar got into a car with a political opponent and a bag of money," he said.



Mohammed Sarwar at the news conference yesterday

"That spells the end of any MP's career. He must go now."

Mr Guthrie claimed that when the scandal broke last week, Mr Sarwar said he would

go if he was damaging Tony Blair's premiership. "He has to recognise that he is harming the party. He should keep his promise and quit," he said.

Widdecombe warns of immigrant flood

Michael Streeter

The former Conservative Home Office minister Ann Widdecombe yesterday criticised a planned review of immigration laws which could make it easier for gay men and women to join their partners in Britain.

The Home Office confirmed that tribunal hearings dealing with such cases could be adjourned until the overhaul of policy - which could affect 1,000 people immediately - is finished.

The review, which a spokesman said could take "some time", will determine whether the immigration entry criteria could be made the same for all couples, married or unmarried, heterosexual or gay. At present, individuals can join their partners only if they are married or engaged.

Ms Widdecombe said yesterday she opposed any relaxation of the immigration laws for common law or single sex relationships, which would "open up the floodgates for abuse" of the system.

She said the previous government had tightened the immigration system to prevent people coming to the UK fraudulently. There was no need for a review and any relaxation of the rules "would be very, very easily abused", she said.

She added: "The system makes it clear you must have a valid and subsistent marriage. If you allow people to come in on the basis that they have a same-sex relationship you have no real means of testing it."

Last night the gay rights group Stonewall said it knew of 500 gay couples who want to live together in Britain and would

he allowed to if the law was changed.

A Stonewall spokesman said: "We think everybody should be treated equally before the law. We think it's wrong that 500 couples have no right to live together in the same country."

"Jack Straw has made a commitment," he said. "We are quite confident that he will deal with that, but we do not know on what terms."

A Home Office spokesman said: "The Home Secretary gave a commitment in opposition to review the position of homosexual and common law partners applying for entry to the UK."

Firms begin to value art for workers' sake

Michael Streeter

For many in the cut-throat world of commerce, works of art have traditionally meant little more than good investment opportunities.

Now there are signs that the business community is beginning to value art for the worker's sake - as shown by the number of firms renting "instant" collections.

Julian Thomas of Art Contact, which hires out paintings and other works to companies, confirmed yesterday there was a trend towards hiring art for the workplace.

"There is definitely a growing interest, and the number of inquiries for rental is growing all the time."

Many of the works of art tend to be abstract, and although a

number are from lesser-known artists, some rented pieces include screenprints by the well-known painter Bert Ivin, who was commissioned to produce a sculpture of Archbishop Desmond Tutu two years ago.

The concept involves a company hiring a collection - a minimum of 10 pictures - for a fixed period, with the firm then be-

ing given the option to buy the works or continue renting.

According to Mr Thomas, the commercial advantages for a firm in renting include payments which are fully tax-deductible, and flexibility: the pictures can be swapped if clients don't like them. They are also used to "impress" business clients, he said.

But there are also aesthetic

reasons for hiring the art. "The use of art makes [the office] a more pleasant place to work in," said Mr Thomas.

UPS Worldwide Logistics, which describes itself as a provider of integrated logistical solutions to businesses, started renting art when it moved into a new building in St Albans, Hertfordshire, last July.

The firm's business support

manager, Victoria Edward, said there were 15 works in the collection, with a capital value of around £5,000, which they were hiring for £47 a week. She said when they took over the building it was little more than a shell.

"We wanted to make it lively without going over the top. Some of them were very colourful - it would have been hard without them on the walls."

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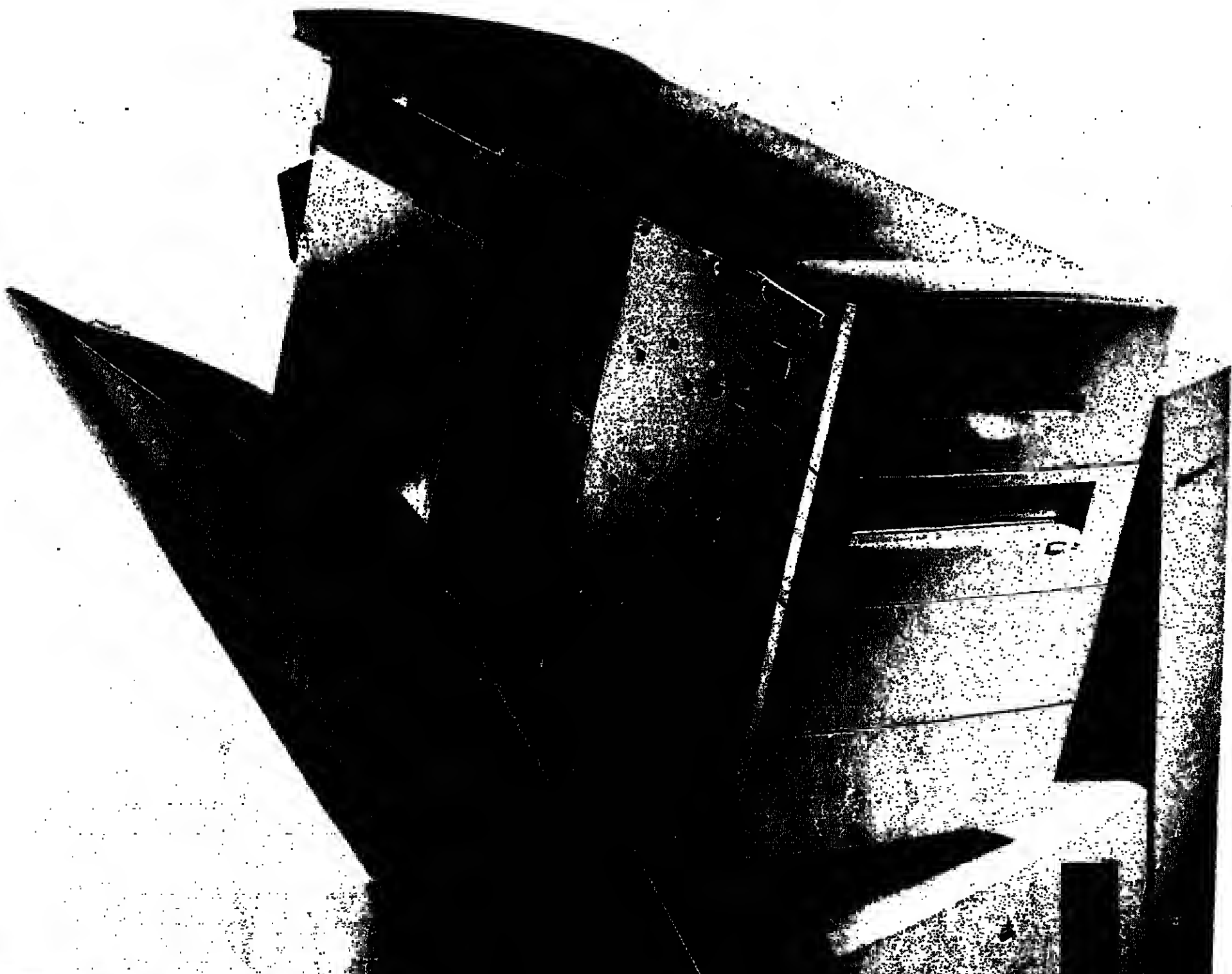
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news

Clinton to repeat Cabinet history

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

There is very little that is new under the sun, and yesterday's excited reports of President Bill Clinton addressing the Cabinet, and Baroness Thatcher being called in to advise Tony Blair were quickly put into proportion by the precedents.

Tony Benn said he had been surprised to read in the Sunday papers that the President's address to Cabinet next Thursday was the first time such a thing had happened for 180 years.

Having served as a cabinet minister in the Wilson and Callaghan administrations, Mr Benn said: "Everything is new now, of course, even calling people by their Christian names in Cabinet which would be disgraceful."

But on a point of fact, he said that President Richard Nixon had addressed Harold Wilson's Cabinet on 25 February 1969, and he had written about it in the volume of his diaries entitled *Office without Power*. In it, he had said: "We sat around the Cabinet table and Harold welcomed him formally. It was rather agreeable. Nixon said a word, how he was anxious that co-operation with Britain shouldn't only be about foreign policy; it should cover the whole range of domestic matters."

"He laid great emphasis on the current problems of youth ... and then we had a discussion," Mr Benn also told *The Independent* that he had had a number of phone calls yesterday, "trying to get someone on the left to protest about Blair meeting Thatcher. But what people forget is that prime

ministers and leaders of the opposition meet absolutely regularly and always have done."

Corroboration was delivered by Lord Callaghan, the former prime minister, who told BBC Radio 4's *World this Weekend* that, 11 years after he had left office, he had been called in to advise John Major soon after he became Prime Minister. He said it was common practice in the United States, too, where President Clinton had sought the advice of former presidents, Ford and Carter. "And it's not unknown in this country," he said.

"In exactly the same circumstances, John Major was elected in November 1990, and he had to go to a European heads of government meeting in Rome in December 1990 ..."

"I had a call from Downing Street asking if I would go over and talk to him and I went over, I suppose, in exactly the same circumstances as now [with Baroness Thatcher being asked to discuss issues with Mr Blair in advance of last Friday's summit in Noordwijk]."

"We had a substantial conversation about a number of issues, international and domestic, with a certain amount of gossip at the end. We talked about the people he would meet and how people get on and so on, and we discussed basic issues. It happens and it's eminently sensible to do it."

Lord Callaghan said he was very encouraged by what the new Labour government was doing. "I think it has created a new atmosphere," he said, "and I feel a new enthusiasm even in my old bones."



Sacred site: The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, and his chaplain, Canon Colin Fletcher, walking in the grounds of the new museum

Photograph: Emma Bood

Pilgrims take easy route to Canterbury

Clare Garner

Pilgrims following in the footsteps of St Augustine arrived in Canterbury yesterday in considerably less time and more comfort than their predecessor 1,400 years earlier.

Fifty ecumenical volunteers clambered out of their specially commissioned coaches, having taken one week to retrace the journey from Rome to Canterbury which took St Augustine

an entire year in 597. They were met by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, and Cardinal Basil Hume, head of the Roman Catholic Church in England, at St Augustine's landing place at Hugin Green, near Ramsgate. The reception crowd also included Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Church of Scotland worshippers.

The celebrations marking the 1,400th anniversary of St Augustine's arrival in Kent to

convert the English to Christianity will reach a climax today when the Prince of Wales attends a special service at Canterbury Cathedral.

The service will be a unique occasion in the history of English Christianity. The sixth-century *Canterbury Gospels*, a book believed to have been brought to England by St Augustine himself, has been transported from its home at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, to form a fo-

cal point of the celebrations. The book is normally only brought to Canterbury for the enthronement of a new archbishop.

The presence of the Prince, who has sparked controversy with his outspoken opinions on religious faith, is seen by some as an attempt to heal the rift with the Church of England.

Dr Carey gave a sermon at a service in Canterbury's St Martin and St Paul Church, saying: "As today, so in the time of

Bertha, a congregation met faithfully here to bear witness to Christ in the midst of a population that had either never had or had largely lost touch with their Christian roots."

"But as today, too, so in the time of Augustine, people came from afar to this city to share their faith and to spread the good news of Christ."

Earlier, Dr Carey opened a £1m English Heritage museum. Among the exhibits are artefacts

and manuscripts relating to the arrival of the saint which have never been viewed by the public. The museum is on the site of the ruined abbey, founded by St Augustine in 1898.

Each pilgrim was given two copies of St Mark's Gospel, one to study on the journey and the other to give away, as well as an olive branch to represent peace, when they left Rome. Their journey ends in London-derry on 9 June.

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As a business traveller, wouldn't it be great if the airline you fly most often were linked to other major airlines that could fly you anywhere you wanted to go. Smoothly. Effortlessly. Efficiently. Wouldn't it be great if you had access to more airport lounges. And when flying on any of these major airlines, you could

international

Taliban army's victory ties up control of Afghanistan

Kathy Gannon
Associated Press

Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan — Taliban fighters moved swiftly yesterday to assert their authority over this northern stronghold, whose capture nearly completed a three-year campaign to unite Afghanistan under the white flag of the radical Islamic army.

From loudspeakers atop Mazar-e-Sharif's ancient mosque, mutinous commanders from the army of northern warlord Rashid Dostum hailed his defeat and the capture of his capital.

Yesterday, Pakistan became the first country to recognise the Taliban government and urged other countries and organisations to do the same. The decision was announced by the Foreign Minister, Gohar Ayub Khan.

No country had previously recognised the Taliban government, set up in September last year when the Islamic militia captured the capital Kabul.

Mr Dostum escaped on Friday to Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, and arrived in Turkey yesterday, reportedly seeking asylum. Turkey, critical of the Taliban, has backed Mr Dostum, who is an ethnic Uzbek.

The fall of Mazar-e-Sharif brought virtually all of Afghanistan — barring a few pockets of resistance — under one regime for the first time since the Soviet army ended a 10-year occupation in 1989.

"Don't be afraid. Open your shops. All is safe," said Majed Rozi, one of the mutineers that deserted Mr Dostum a week



Rashid Dostum: The defeated Afghan warlord arriving at a hotel in Ankara yesterday
Photograph: Reuters

ago to join the Taliban army. The streets were calm despite some looting. Jeeps packed with soldiers carrying rocket launchers and assault rifles roared through the streets.

The Taliban victory was a boost to Pakistan, which had supported the group amid the chaos of feuding Afghan militias that followed the ousting of the Soviet-backed regime in 1992.

But Saturday's advance could bode ill for Central Asian republics to the north, which had backed Mr Dostum in the hope that he would shield their Muslim populations from the Taliban's influence.

Russia pledged to intervene if fighting spread to former Soviet republics which belong to the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Taliban foreign minister yesterday sought to quell fears of further conquest. "I assure the world that neighbouring countries that the Taliban government is strictly adhering to a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries," Mullah Mohammed Ghous said in Islamabad.

On Saturday, some armed men were seen running from the shops of money changers with pockets stuffed with wads of the nearly worthless local currency and with US dollars.

The United Nations guest house in the heart of the city was robbed by more than a dozen men. Aid workers and foreign journalists said the intruders escaped with money, two-way radios, watches and a television satellite receiver. No one was hurt.

Giant posters of Mr Dostum that had dominated the city lay in tatters outside the grand blue mosque that houses the tomb of one of Islam's greatest saints, Hazrat Ali. In their place were pictures of Rasool Pahlawan, the brother of General Malik Pahlawan who led the mutiny against Mr Dostum. After his assassination, Rasool Pahlawan became a folk hero.

From the domed mosque that dominates the landscape of Mazar-e-Sharif, a cleric cried praises of the Taliban and its leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar. "Today God is with us and with the Taliban. Every problem we have will be solved.



Victory: Fighters loyal to General Malik Pahlawan, who led the mutiny against Rashid Dostum and formed an alliance with the Taliban, patrolling the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif yesterday
Photograph: BK Bangash/AP

Communism is gone forever. Dostum is gone forever," rang the cleric's voice over the loud speaker.

A Taliban commander said the religious army will soon head south toward the territo-

ry controlled by Ahmed Shah Massoud, the defence minister of the former government that was expelled from Kabul last September by the Taliban.

The Taliban have imposed a

severe version of Islam that bars women from working, bans alcohol and most entertainment, and forces men to pray in the mosques.

The Taliban captured the Salang Pass, which lies on the

main highway from Kabul to Central Asia, when a commander of forces defending it struck a deal with the Islamic militia. Hundreds of jubilant Taliban troops waited to move across the front line.

Poland votes on freedom charter

Andrzej Styliński
Associated Press

Warsaw — Eight years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Poles voted yesterday on a new constitution that would wipe out the last remnants of the communist system and foster Poland's desire for full integration into Europe.

The new charter commits Poland to a market economy and private ownership, guarantees personal freedoms necessary for entrance into the European Union and ensures civilian control of the military necessary for NATO membership.

Poles leading up to the referendum indicated that most voters favoured the new charter, but the referendum campaign has emphasised traditional political divisions.

In the last major political confrontation before legislative elections in September, right-wing parties — including Solidarity — are calling on supporters to reject the charter passed by the left-wing parliament.

Some 28 million people are eligible to vote on the charter. Early results based on exit polls were to be released after voting closed at 10pm, but official results were not expected until late today or early tomorrow.

President Aleksander Kwasniewski, who led parliament's constitutional committee for two years before being elected president, has been one of the charter's chief backers, saying it will usher in political stability.

Right-wing parties, who found themselves outside parliament after the 1993 legislative elections, criticise it mostly on moral grounds. Solidarity, the former trade union that led to the fall of the communist regime in 1989, wanted the charter to state that God-given law, or a universal set of values, was higher than any law made by men.

In a gesture to the church, the charter guarantees protection of human life, but it does not specifically ban abortion. It also outlaws homosexual marriages and guarantees the right of religious classes in schools.

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international

Internet to sweep away French law on polls

John Lichfield
Paris

If yesterday's French parliamentary election changes nothing else, it may change the rules banning the publication of opinion polls in the run-up to election day.

It became clear over the last week that acts of national political censorship of this kind cannot easily survive the coming of the Internet. The issue is emblematic of one of the themes raised by the election campaign: how should France react and adapt to the Anglo-Saxon-led global revolution in information and open markets?

As France went to the polls yesterday in the first of the two rounds of the snap parliamentary elections, the foreign and Internet-led assault on the national polling rules continued to have political and legal reverberations.

Under the 20-year-old election code, opinion polls cannot be made public in France in the last week of the campaign. They continue to be taken, for private clients, such as political parties and banks, but they cannot be published or broadcast.

In the last week, several of these poll findings were published on the Internet, on the web sites of British

and Swiss newspapers and even that of the French daily, *Liberation*. In protest at the nonsense that this made of the election law, three French newspapers — *Le Parisien*, *La Tribune* and *la République des Pyrénées* — reprinted the findings. They showed, in fact, little change on the last legally published polls forecasting a slender victory for the centre-right government.

The French opinion poll watchdog has asked the interior ministry to take legal action against these three publications and also against *Liberation*, which advertised the presence of the polls on its web site. The newspapers could face fine of up to £50,000 for each offence.

No action is likely against the *Daily Telegraph*, which commissioned its own poll, published in Britain and on the Internet but not in its overseas edition. Nothing is likely to happen to the *Tribune de Genève*, which published poll findings in its Swiss edition. Its French edition published extracts from the electoral code, details of its web site and a telephone number for French readers to call. The Internet address was inundated — 36,000 visits in one hour, including an attempt to introduce a virus and close down the service.

The absurdity of the situation is



Nom d'un chien: Voters chatting in Menton yesterday, as France went to the polls in the first round of the snap parliamentary elections

Photograph: Brian Harris

demonstrated by the fact that two of the telephone calls received by the Swiss newspaper came from the French industry ministry and the office of the former French prime minister, Laurent Fabius.

The issue has wider political sensitivity because of a widespread conviction in France that globalism and

the media revolution are a threat to — even a plot against — the French way of life. Senior officials of the French polling organisations said the week's events proved that the polling truce could not survive the age of global information and should be abolished.

Lionel Jospin, the Socialist leader, said the law had to be changed. If

France wished to continue with its polling truce, it would have to go the whole hog and outlaw the taking of opinion polls in the final week, not just their publication.

The real voting passed off yesterday with only two or three minor incidents. Three bombs exploded near government buildings in Corsica, but

this is a fairly standard event on any weekend. A suspect package was blown up by security services near a polling station at Villeurbanne in the suburbs of Lyons. It turned out to be a bag of washing.

On a more productive note, a candidate for the radical-left Mouvement des Citoyens, was taken to

hospital on the eve of polling to have a baby. Catherine Cotard, 36, a candidate at Mootsilar, in the Rhône valley, gave birth to a healthy daughter. This seemed likely to be her only success of the weekend. As a candidate, Ms Cotard was not expected to survive into next week's decisive, second round of voting.

Racists, rednecks and the reform of Canada

With a poll imminent, reactionaries are out in force, writes Tim Cornwell

Vancouver — On his small square patch of Canada, surrounded by a nice-foot fence of English laurel, Reform Man is railing against the Freochmen who run the bloody government, and dropping remarks about Chinese drivers.

"I admire a lot of those other cultures, but in their own country," said Sid Blanchett, a diesel engine mechanic. Mr Blanchett lives in north Vancouver, a hotly contested riding in the 2 June election. There are two signs outside his fence: one for the Reform Party, and another that says "No More Prime Ministers from Quebec". He's proud to be a racist and a redneck, he said, if that means defending his own culture, religion, and traditions.

Covering Reform can be like waking up in a Monty Python sketch, as one Vancouver journalist said this week. Old-fashioned caricatures pop up and say the most extraordinary things. Members belt out *Oh Canada* at party meetings, and while they drop clangers about blacks, gays, or Sikhs, the race they really detest is the French.

In 1993, Reform went from one seat in the Canadian parliament to 52, riding the back of the conservative collapse. Four years later, through the Liberals' seem assured of re-election, it is Reform that dominates the political conversation, along with its leader, Preston Manning.

Anger against the conservatives put Reform in place: Mr Manning is now fanning the

flames against Quebec to bring his voters back to the polls, accusing his opponents of pandering to Freoch Canada.

The other party leaders — all Quebec politicians, as he has pointed out — turned on him for running the most divisive campaign in Canadian history, even fomenting civil war.

"They are constitutional arsonists," said Warren Kinsella, a former journalist and aide to the Liberal Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, challenging the Reform incumbent in North Vancouver. A Bible-toting prairie Christian, Mr Manning's political base is in Alberta, where his father was premier for 25 years

and a radio preacher for nearly 50. At 54, Mr Manning recently had his teeth straightened, and dropped his clunky glasses after laser surgery on his eyes. But voters still seem uncomfortable with him personally — "a bit too odd for me" said one man, in the streets of "North Van".

His support is almost exclusively in the west, in Alberta and neighbouring British Columbia, where he won 24 of 32 BC seats. He would actually like Quebec to leave Canada, it is whispered, because without it Reform would have a shot at forming a government. His showing this time could determine whether Reform can overtake the stum-

bling Bloc Quebecois as the country's official opposition, or whether it will eventually fade like other upstart populist movements from the region. Reform is trying to push east into Ontario; at the same time it looks to lose several seats on home turf in British Columbia.

The party's platform is conservative, but with a populist edge that has made corporate donors slow to hop on board. It is for downsizing the federal government in favour of the provinces; longer jail sentences; limiting Indian and Eskimo land rights; keeping out all but skilled (read European) immigrants; referendums on abortion and the

death penalty. It embraces tax cuts and rejects gun control and multi-culturalism, having led a parliamentary charge on the Mounties for allowing Sikh recruits to wear turbans.

Mr Manning once described homosexuality, condemned by his church, as "destructive to the individual and in the long run to the society", a remark he now says was misquoted.

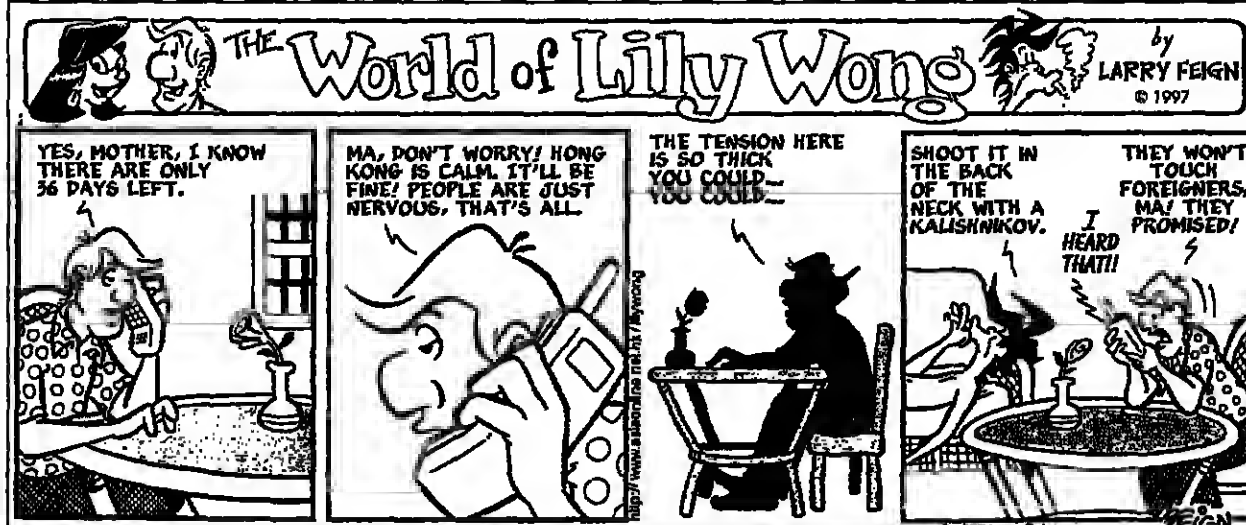
Reform candidates stress their modernity with volunteers on rollerblades and handing out short home videos on the door step rather than canvassing directly. The Canadian press, however, has delighted in reporting a string of politically

incorrect remarks by top party figures. Black or gay employees could fairly be sent to the back of a shop by the owner if a customer is "uncomfortable", one MP famously remarked last year. Another quoted Adolf Hitler in Parliament.

Reform's sudden victory undoubtedly attracted a lot of unsavoury types, and put a few in Parliament. But Western Canadians, even leftists who loathe him personally, are irritated at being cast as political neanderthals by the eastern-dominated media. Vancouver intellectuals say Mr Manning has touched the west's genuine grievances over years of being short-changed by Ottawa, as the east has claimed the lion's share of the government pie, from ship-building and military contracts, to cabinet posts and even arts funding.

Vancouver is demanding more attention as Canada's fastest-growing, hippest city, and a magnet for Pacific trade and culture. "We are under-represented in every way, and the Reform Party has caught on to that," said Peter Newman, Canada's best known political writer, a former editor of *Maclean's* magazine.

The establishment "hate and fear" Preston Manning, said Alan Twigg, editor of *BC Book World*, a quarterly books magazine. "Reform don't represent me, but they do represent a lot of people. All he's really doing is expressing the alienation of people in the western half of Canada. They don't get a fair shake."



significant shorts

Kabila's troops 'killed unarmed refugees'

Laurent Kabila's rebels massacred more than 200 unarmed Rwandan Hutu refugees at a port on the Congo River earlier this month and a further 140 at a village to the south, witnesses said.

Priests, civil servants and residents told Reuters news agency that Mr Kabila's Alliance killed more than 200 refugees on a quayside at Mbandaka, on the same day that his fighters seized the western town. A delegation of priests visited the new regional governor because they were outraged when he had said no refugees were killed. Meanwhile, ambassadors from the United States and Britain congratulated the self-proclaimed President Kabila and promised their support. Reuters — Mbandaka

Neo-Nazis burn church

Suspected German neo-Nazi arsonists burnt down a Catholic church in Lübeck. Firefighters found swastikas scrawled in the aisle of the St. Vicelin Church — two around the name of a priest who is campaigning to stop the deportation of Algerian asylum-seekers. Reuters — Lübeck

Northern League test strength

Italy's Northern League held a "referendum" on forming a breakaway northern state in a trial of strength with its political opponents. The League's leader, Umberto Bossi, said that the exercise would be a "punch in the teeth" for politicians in Rome and "a step forward on the path to freedom for the North". Prime Minister Romano Prodi and President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro responded with mockery and condemnation. Reuters — Milan

Engelbert wows Beirut

A packed house in Beirut cheered singer Engelbert Humperdinck, 61, as he performed old favourites like "Please release me" and "The shadow of your smile". "He was breathtaking. I could listen to him for ages," said Wadad Demechkieh, one of the fans. AP — Beirut

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Troops oust Sierra Leone's president

Claudia McElroy
Reuters

Freetown - Soldiers in the West African state of Sierra Leone ousted the civilian government yesterday. The president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, fled into exile in Guinea.

The coup leaders announced a dusk-to-dawn curfew and warned Nigerian troops stationed in Freetown, the capital, not to intervene.

Residents reported continuing gunfire and looting by uniformed

men hours after the coup was declared. Soldiers exchanged sustained fire with Nigerian troops guarding the state house in Freetown.

Heavy gunfire first broke out soon after 5am from the direction of State House and the military headquarters, with troops using machine-guns, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades.

Shooting continued into the early afternoon, and soldiers broke into housing compounds of United Nations staff and Lebanese business-

men, looting cars, fuel and household goods.

The soldiers called for the return to Sierra Leone of Foday Sankoh, leader of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who has been kept in a hotel suite in the Nigerian capital for the past two months by Nigeria's military authorities.

Sankoh said the coup came as no surprise. "I was not informed by man, but I had a vision from the Almighty a few days ago that something was about to happen in Sierra Leone."

Sierra Leone, one of the world's poorest countries, has seen several coups and coup attempts in recent years.

The soldiers, all enlisted men rather than officers, want the return from exile of Captain Solomon Musa, a former deputy military leader linked to coup allegations in 1993, and of General Julius Maada Bio, who led a successful coup in January 1996 before handing over to Mr Kabbah after elections.

Witnesses said about 20 heavily

armed soldiers broke into the Pademba Road central prison and freed more than 600 inmates.

Soldiers patrolling the streets wore red ceremonial uniforms instead of their usual green fatigues.

Nigerian troops tried to prevent the Sierra Leonean soldiers entering certain areas.

A spokesman at State House said Mr Kabbah had been flown by helicopter to neighbouring Guinea, the usual refuge for ousted Sierra Leonean heads of state.

The army has shown growing signs of discontent with troop reductions specified under a peace agreement signed by Mr Kabbah and the RUF in November, and there has been tension between a southern tribe, the Mendes, who back Mr Kabbah's Sierra Leone People's Party, and northern tribes who feel marginalised by his government.

A spokesman for the coup leaders said the activities of traditional hunters known as Kamajors would be banned. Under Mr Kabbah, they

have been developed as a security militia in the south-east, initially to defend mining areas against RUF attacks.

There have been clashes between Kamajors and the army, and many soldiers resent the resources provided by the presidency. The Deputy Defence Minister, Hinga Norman, is a former Kamajor.

In the north, a series of recent attacks was officially blamed on the rebels, but the army was widely rumoured to be involved.

Rafsanjani sings swan song with a human touch

Robert Fisk hears the former Iranian president's reflections on his eight years as leader

It was Ali Akbar Rafsanjani's swan song and he was enjoying it. No, he wouldn't say if he had voted for Ayatollah Mohammed Khatami, who was elected President by an astonishing two-thirds of Iranians on Friday. He was supposed to be neutral, wasn't he?

The apple cheeks glowed, the Billy Hunter fringe peeped as mischievously as ever from beneath the turban, the hands played as usual with the green worry-beads, tongue just occasionally moistening his lips when the questions got a little too near the mark.

Was President Khatami's government going to respond to the vote of youth and women for change and modernism, he was asked? The tongue flicked over the lips again. It would "make no sense" to interpret the vote of young Iranians as a protest against the previous government, he said. "If you look at the statements by different candidates, you can see their emphasis on...the preservation of the system."

This was being economical with the truth. The voters gave their support to Hojatoleslam Rafsanjani's 54-year-old successor because he was offering new interpretations of an Islamic republic and some real hope of freedom of speech, not the preservation of any "system".

But Mr Rafsanjani is to be an influential figure looming over Mr Khatami's cabinet, a member of the Council of Expediency which will "advise" the government on policies and arbitrate on differences emerging from the *majlis* (parliament) - most of whose conservative clerical members were opposed to Mr Khatami's candidature.

So was all this a message to Iran's new president, a reminder that new brooms should sweep slowly?

Mr Khatami moved between



Former president Rafsanjani (above), and Khatami (below)



humour and melancholy. When a Chinese journalist asked a four-minute question - about youth votes, aspirations and government responsiveness - Mr Rafsanjani gave the man a withering smile and muttered: "Since China is a big country, I suppose the questions are bound to be the same."

He also looked a little tired - cheeks hanging lower than usual - as he talked to journalists, with unusual candour,

of the more depressing moments of his eight years as president.

The "bitter experiences" would include the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan, he said, the lack of political progress in negotiations with the neutral Gulf states and the "continuing status of Palestine". At one point, commenting on the disputes between the Arab Gulf nations and Iran, he ruminated on the large US military presence in the region, adding wistfully that "unfortunately, the problem is that the Gulf is now neither Persian nor Arab, because it has become an American Gulf."

He was no less reflective when asked by an American journalist whether Iran was buying chemical weapons from China, the latest claim against Tehran to come from the State Department. It was false, he said, but then drifted off into his memories of gas warfare during the conflict with Iraq.

"We have had such a malevolent experience of the use of chemical weapons that we would never want to have or use them. At the time, I was the sole commander of the war, and we were fighting in the [Iraqi Kurdish] Halabja area - and I witnessed such terrible scenes, I could never forget them. The people of Halabja co-operated with us and didn't fight us and so Saddam was angry and resorted to the advanced chemical weapons he had received from Germany and used them against those people."

Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons at Halabja is well-known - and the reference to Germany was a sharp dig at the country which has just accused Iran's spiritual leader of organising the murder of exiled opposition leaders. But there was something all too real about the way Mr Rafsanjani



Yesterday's man: Tehran worker removing a campaign poster of defeated candidate Ali Akbar Nategh-Nuri Photograph: AFP

opened his arms wide, remembering how "the chemicals went over long distances and hung down over the ground and when anyone even smelt the substance, they died. I saw such awful things there, and I hope this scene will never be repeated in any country."

There were other clues to the man's personality; a suggestion that, yes, women might be giv-

ing ministerial portfolios in a future government - a sop to Mr Khatami, perhaps - and a long diatribe about the Iranian prisoners-of-war still believed to be in Iraqi captivity. "We are really sorry for those people who have been kept as POWs in Iraqi prisons for many years. We think there are about 5,000 of our POWs in Iraqi hands. But after a while the Iraqi govern-

ment said there were no more POWs with them and from that time onwards, we have not received any information about the fate of those prisoners. Their families are waiting to hear. Kuwait also has the same problem with Iraq..."

It was Mr Rafsanjani who had to persuade Ayatollah Khomeini to end the eight-year war with Iraq in 1988. "I have

drunk from the cup of poison," the old man told Mr Rafsanjani then. Nevertheless, the departing president revealed yesterday that the Iranians were to send an invitation to Saddam to the forthcoming Islamic summit in Tehran. No one dared ask what he would do if the world-famous "Beast of Baghdad" decided to make an appearance.

Sleaze puts Arafat at risk

Eric Silver
Jerusalem

Yasser Arafat may soon face his first serious parliamentary test of confidence after the Palestinian Authority took the extraordinary step at the weekend of putting a figure on its own corruption and inefficiency.

Angry opposition MPs were yesterday drafting a motion of censure over an official auditors' report that \$323m, almost 40 per cent of the Palestinian Authority budget, was either wasted or misused last year.

Some ministers were also accused of channelling funds from foreign donors into private bank accounts. The member states of the European Union are responsible for 54 per cent of aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

One minister alone was said to have run up a \$7,000 telephone bill in a single month. As much as \$50m from purchase tax on cars that should have gone into the general budget was spent on cars for officials. Senior figures are alleged to have awarded contracts to companies in which they had a personal interest.

Jarar Kidwa, who compiled the 600-page report for Mr Arafat, promised: "All ministers, deputies and directors-general who are behind this waste will be brought to justice. Names and details of the misuse of funds have been given to President Arafat."

Dr Halder Abdel Shafi, a veteran nationalist MP who was among the founders of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, said: "We had an inkling that things were bad, but we didn't know they were as bad as this. This performance is far from what the people expected. The contrast between the conditions of the majority of our people and the way ministers and high officials live, their big houses and cars, is shameful. If there is a chance that it might pass, I would vote no confidence in the Government."

Once upon a time there was an honest traffic cop ...

At least life here has not lost its sense of mystery. Walk into any bookshop in Moscow. Consumerism and computer electronics may have stripped the Western world of its magic, but Russian children still read fairy stories, and believe the planet is populated by no small number of elves, goblins, witches, pirates and sundry other life forms who outshine the dreary human being. And that, in my view, is exactly how it should be.

My favourite fairy tale was told to me by a patient young woman called Irena who teaches me Russian. It must be made clear that she insists her story is absolutely true in every detail. Being a Westerner, and a sceptic to boot, I do not know if I entirely believe her; but you can be the judge. It is the story of the White Crow.

His real name is Alexander. For some years, he has been working in Moscow as an officer with the traffic police, otherwise known as the State Automobile Inspectorate or GAI, whose staff are about as popular here as an Iranian in the White House.

Their dreadful reputation is rooted in their habit of standing on the streets of Moscow, flagging down cars, usually for no reason, and extracting bribes from drivers. In the last 18 months, I have been compelled to shell out three times, after being stopped on the flimsiest of pretexts.

Alexander, however, was different. He is, Irena insists, a highly educated man who only joined the force because the alternative was a compulsory stint in the Soviet army

in Afghanistan. He was also the only honest officer in the GAI. No matter how hard his colleagues pressed him, he refused to accept bribes of any kind, or to give in to the threats and intimidation of party big wigs and other jumped-up officials who felt they were above the law.

Of the latter, he had plenty of experience. For several years, his beat was the Rublyovskoye Chaussée, a wide road that sweeps out of Moscow towards the towns and villages where many of Moscow's "bump" - a term for the high-ups which literally means "bumps" - have their country houses. Then, as now,

MOSCOW DAYS

every weekend the road was packed with expensive cars, travelling at high speeds, their lights flashing.

"Drunk drivers would shout at him: 'Do you know who I am? Do you know who my father is? I am going to complain about you,'" says Irena, a close friend of the Crow's. "But he absolutely refused to budge. If they had broken the law, they would have to pay the official penalty."

The story has a sad ending. The White Crow - or "*bielaya varona*" - the term given to people who stand out - has been promoted to a senior rank and is now working as an administrator. Irena says his wife tired

of seeing his colleagues grow rich with corruption while he scraped by on government wages, so she left him. The force's only straight officer is now off the streets, and alone.

Yet, gloomy though the conclusion is, many Moscow drivers have now even more reason for not wanting to deal with an honest cop. This month, penalties for road traffic offences were raised by up to 15 times.

Speeding is punishable by a fine of more than 1.2m roubles (£130), the sort of money that the average Muscovite makes in a month (although car owners generally tend to be wealthier than the norm). Not wear-

ing a seat-belt can set you up back £63. With such draconian punishments, many motorists, whether innocent or guilty, prefer to pay a lesser bribe to a bent cop than to pay the official fine.

There is another way to ease the blow. Under the law, the GAI (pronounced Guy-ee) have considerable discretion when deciding the exact level of the fine. The fines are defined partly by the circumstances of the offence but also by the attitude of the driver when he (there are very few women drivers) is flagged down. A certain amount of servility pays off, although blatant grovelling is widely deemed counterproductive. So, too, is being stropic. There is an offence listed as "conscious insubordination". Fine: 1.25m roubles (£138).

Some foreigners sail close to the wind on this front by pretending they understand no Russian.

The authorities do seem to be trying to clean up the GAI. They are working on a scheme to introduce a plastic debit card, which you purchase in advance. Traffic police will be able to deduct fines from the card, using an electronic scanning machine. Mysteriously, the force's commanders appear to believe their officers will dutifully use these, instead of asking the victims for a lesser sum in cash, and pocketing it. Perhaps the bosses are right; perhaps there are more white crows out there on the streets. But I suspect that Russian children are not the only ones who believe in fairy tales.

Phil Reeves

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Kathy comes home a proper film star

Interview



Deborah Ross
talks to
KATHY BURKE

Kathy Burke knows Gary Oldman from way back. From when they were teenagers, in fact, and appeared in a play together, and she fell rather in love with him and made "a bit of myself moaning all over 'im like some big prunny". Did she sleep with him? I ask. No, she says, although she could have done. Certainly, he was keen. He wanted, she says proudly, "to be my first, actually".

And you resisted? You could have lost your virginity to Gary Oldman and you resisted? Yes, she says, because at that time "it would have been all about him and nothing to do with me". Kathy has great integrity. Kathy knows when emotions are true and when they are not, which is what makes her such a great actress. And Gary, of course, knows Kathy is like this, which is why he cast her in his film *Nil By Mouth*. I think Kathy must be one of the few actresses to have been offered a part because she didn't sleep with the director. I think Kathy Burke rather fine. As does the rest of the world, now.

Last week, Kathy Burke was named best actress at Cannes for her performance as Val, a battered wife, in Gary's autobiographical film. A lot of people were surprised she beat Kim Basinger and Sigourney Weaver and the like, but I wasn't. She's always been brilliant. Brilliant in drama series like *Common as Muck* and *Mr Wroe's Virgins*, brilliant as those comic grotesques Tina Bishop, the darts-fixated super-slattern, and Waynetta Sloh in *Harry Enfield and Friends*, who is very un-Kim or Sigourney but does pick at her cold sores in a most becoming way.

Anyway, she was as stunned as anyone, she says. She was at home, in her council flat, still in her jim-jams and having a fag ("Cos I'm always having a fag, aren't I?") when the news came. "I thought: 'Fuckin' hell, oh my God'. I was in a terrible state. I didn't have time to think. I didn't even have time to wash me hair." She says walking up the steps at the Palais in Cannes, hand in hand with Gary to collect her prize, was "one of the most boo'ful moments of my life". I love the way she says "boo'ful". If nothing else, she must be treasured for this.

She hadn't spoken to Gary for years when he approached her with the script. Yes, they did fall out rather over the sleep-together business. No, she doesn't regret not taking him up on his offer. She was very young, 19. It was probably just a crush, anyway. But it was "boo'ful" getting to know him again.

He's a "proper man", she continues, and she likes "proper men". What is a proper man exactly? A proper man, she explains, is one "who can see when a woman's vulnerable and not try and destroy her because of it". Winnie Jones, she then adds, is a proper man. Winnie Jones? "Yeah, he looks after his wife, who's very poorly. I met him once when I was dressed up as Tina Bishop. A right old dog I looked. But he still flirted with me and went 'Phoooar



Cannes do: walking up the steps of the Palais with Gary Oldman to collect the Best Actress award was 'one of the most boo'ful moments of my life'

and wanted to get hold of me." And you like that? "I love that!" she cries.

We meet at a hotel in Dorset, where she is filming *Tam Jones* for the BBC. She is still in quite a spin. The bouquets! The offers! The invite from the Queen! Invite from the Queen? Yes! Buckingham Palace faxed this morning. She's been invited to the Queen's polo match next month. "The Queen's fucking polo match!" cries Kathy. "What'll you wear?" I cry, because I'm shallow and want to know about such things. "Fuck knows," she cries, because she isn't and doesn't. Although, later, you do get a tentative: "Something linen, I think."

Miss Burke is 33 and rather limphaired, with chain-smoker's skin and darkly shadowed eyes. But she is immensely attractive in her own grittily honest way. She has a lovely smile, and those nice teeth, "which were all mashed up and rotten till I got them fixed." She has, she says, no hang-ups about her looks whatsoever. "Boo'y," she says, "is how others make you feel. When I'm with the people who love me, I feel boo'ful."

Nil By Mouth doesn't open here until October, but I'm going to tell you about it anyway, because it's such a remarkable film. Set on a south London estate, there is no narrative as such. Events happen because of who the characters are. The men booze and go to strip joints and beat their wives. The women smoke a lot and cook egg and chips and get beaten. The film is remarkable because, interwoven into all this brutality and pain, there is a good deal of love and this sense that, underneath it all, no one can do without anyone else. It's powerful stuff, as is Kathy's performance. But then she, like Gary, knows about all these things. Kathy's father, Paddy, was a big drinker who could, yes, be ugly and violent. But still she loved him and never doubted he loved her. He told her so, then? "Fuck, yeah. He was Irish. He was always saying: 'I loves you, I loves you, you're my dotter.' He died three years ago and she still misses him horribly. "I used to go see him every day for a cuppa and a fag and a catch-up." The first few months without him were the worst. "I got very thin. Dawn

French had to look after me. She took me to somewhere in Cornwall and fed me up. I got very, very tiny, which is nature's way of saying 'Put your arm around me', innit?"

Kathy was born in Islington, north London - in the poor bit, not the Blair bit - where she still lives today in her one-bed council flat. It's a lovely flat, she says. "It's not in a tower block. It's got its own front door. It's more like a little house." She then adds, irreverently but proudly: "I've got one of those really big tellies."

Her mother, Bridie, died of cancer when she was 18 months old. She's heard she was a very good woman, though. "My Aunt Nellie says she was a boo'ful mother to my brothers. She wouldn't give them their tea without a boo'ful white tablecloth on the table. She gave them the best, babe. She gave them steak." Her brothers, Barry and John, were eight and 10 when their mother died. "It was much more horrendous for them."

Her father being unable to cope with a toddler, she was fostered by a family friend until she was five and her brothers

decided they could look after her themselves. Her brothers sound wonderful, I say. They are, she says.

"They let me be the kid. Even now, John holds my hand when we cross a road. Barry did the cleaning and took out the rubbish. John patched up our uniforms and did the cooking. It was boiled bacon and cabbage on Saturdays and lamb on Sundays, if the money was around." And if it wasn't? "I went to the Auntie Joan's or me Auntie Nellie's for my dinner. God knows what John and Barry did, the poor fuckers."

Where, I wonder, was her father in all this? Drinking? Not all the time, no. "He was a binger. You'd have a couple of months when he'd be sober and try to be a good father and do the right thing and bring home the wages, and then he'd be off. Once I was 13 and on the bus with me mate Mary when we passed this little bit of green where all the wines used to go and it was a little bit embarrassing because I saw me dad there amongst them all. When it was bad, it was very bad." Violent bad? "Yeah, although I don't really want to talk

about that." And at other times? "He was like all drunks. Unhappy and in a lot of pain."

He was a labourer who hated labouring and would, she thinks, have been much more fulfilled as a writer or something. He was an intelligent man. He always made Barry and John and Kathy watch *Play for Today*, because he thought it important. He banned ITV because it was "crap". He read a lot. His favourite book was *Papillon*, which he read countless times.

Kathy was a bright kid. She could read before she was four. She used to spend a lot of time in the Angel Bookshop down Camden Passage, where they let her sit on a stool in the children's section and read until closing without buying anything. She would, she thinks, have been an academic high achiever if the head of her primary school hadn't told her father she needed to go to an all-girls convent job. "I think she thought that if I went to a mixed school I'd get pregnant, not having a mother or anything. I didn't actually start having sex until I was 23. I don't give myself away so easy, sweetheart."

At the convent, the nuns, she said, treated girls like her as if they were "thick as shit". She never took an exam, let alone passed one. She hunked off, mostly. And would, she thinks, have ended up like Val if it hadn't have been for Mr Poole, an English teacher who ran drama sessions which always ended up with him and Kathy improvising something or other. "I would pretend to be a secretary and flirt with him, showing him me terrible teeth."

He recommended she attend classes at the Anna Scher theatre school, which ran special, free evenings for working-class kids. The first time she went she only had to stand up and say her name but, still, it was tremendously exciting. "I just sat and watched. I got home around 9pm. I'm usually a night person. But I remember going into the kitchen, where John was making beans, and saying: 'I'm knackered. I'm going to bed. It's all been too exhilarating.'"

She got her big break in 1982, when *Mail* Zetterling cast her in the film *Scrubbers*. Around the same time, her father gave up drinking. "He went to see me in the film and was so proud. He sat there saying: 'That's my little girl up there.' He knew drink was destroying him, and sometimes he could see it was destroying us. There was a time when I was very cold towards him. Off the booze, he was very cute, very sweet. He drank, I think, because he was fundamentally a shy man and drink took him out of himself. Plus he was left with three kids at 30, for fuck's sake."

He died after prostate cancer spread to his liver. She was holding his hand when he went. He seemed to see something, then smiled, just before he closed his eyes for the final time. Then something, she's not sure what, seemed to flutter out of the room. "Now, I know some people are going to think I'm away with the fairies, but I witnessed it and so did John, who'd always been an atheist. It was a boo'ful experience." Did she forgive him before he went? Forgive him for what, she wants to know. Love, when it's true, is unconditional.

Does she have a lot of love to give? I reckon so, although she finds it hard to find blokes to give it to. She's had plenty of affairs - "although never with married men, because I don't shit on women" - but no long-term relationships. She doesn't know why. Perhaps, I suggest, you give yourself so wholeheartedly, you're scary. Yes, she accepts, I may have a point here. Is the prize going to change her? In some ways, yes. She plans to buy her own flat, now, and she might even start shopping at Agnes B, because she's heard their T-shirts last longer than "the ones you get down Chapel Market".

But as for Hollywood, stuff that. "It would be nice to earn a huge amount of money. Then I could buy all me mates flats as well. But it's not on me agenda. I wanna stick with kindred spirits. I wanna do good work. Good work with kindred spirits is boo'ful." As she is to us.

I have recently collaborated on a small literary joke (*The Meaning of Cantona*, Mainstream, £9.99) which has turned out to be too subtle not only for everyone who has come across it but for me as well. Indeed, it has been pointed out to me by Professor Laurie Taylor that it isn't a joke at all.

I wasn't disposed to argue the point, since Professor Taylor had just introduced me on his afternoon radio show as reader in aesthetics at the University of East Anglia, and I was in any case wearing, at Professor Taylor's invitation, one of those strips of nasal tape which are supposed to make it easier to breathe.

How did this come about? Easily enough, as it happens. Six months ago, it was suggested to my friend Terence Blacker that he might like to write a book about Eric Cantona. Blacker is a distinguished novelist (*Fixer*, *Fame Hotel*, *Reverence*)

Gazza on the menu at Les Deux Magots

Everybody seems to want a copy of 'Que signifie Gazza?' But does the book really exist? By William Donaldson

and he would have haughtily declined the offer had he not remembered suddenly that my life had recently gone pear-shaped and that it would be an act of kindness, therefore, to sub-let the enterprise to me, without the publishers necessarily being aware of this arrangement.

"You must understand," said Blacker, "that it would not be sensible now - or at any time, perhaps - to mention your name."

Fair enough. One should not allow pride to get in the way of paying the rent, so, and on the assumption that the book was expected to be humorous, I dusted down a few old jokes - some about John Motson, others not -

and sought the help of my other friend, Craig Brown.

"Do you have any jokes about Eric Cantona?" I said.

Brown had not heard of Cantona, but after I had explained who he was, he said that it might be amusing to suggest that the British are in thrall to him simply because he's French. Having pointed out that the French are no doubt equally impressed by Paul Gascoigne just because he's English, Brown produced off the top of his head an excellent joke, which survives (under Blacker's name) in the finished book.

Cantona is considering an offer to play the beautiful game in England. Outside Les Deux Magots, philosophy students are deconstructing *Que signifie Gazza?* Les

'One should not allow pride to get in the way of paying the rent'

pensées d'un idiot savant (Gallimard, 1990). Cantona's football skills are not in doubt, but can he compete with England's most lucid contemporary poet of disillusion - and with his ever-present Boswell, M Cinq Estomacs?

Cantona joins the debate; he

reads out extracts from *Que signifie Gazza?* "Quand Sheryl m'a dit que je serais un papa j'ai chié mes pantalons." It would sound better in English, of course.

At which point, Blacker himself became more interested in the project, submitting aphorisms which seemed to me brilliant parodies for some so perfectly judged that they might have been lifted straight from Barthes or Camus (indeed, as I have now discovered, they ... but you're ahead of me).

"Screamingly funny!" I said. "What do you mean, funny?"

said Blacker, managing to maintain a straight face, which made me laugh even more, of course - though I did become a little apprehensive when he suggested that we should try to buy the English translation rights to *Que signifie Gazza?*

The Meaning of Cantona - consisting of Craig Brown's unacknowledged contribution, my three jokes - two about Motson, one not - and Blacker's hilariously enlarged reflections - was published last week, and the reaction has been rather weird.

The Sunday Times and *The Observer* declined to serialise it, but both have sought to purchase English extract rights to *Que signifie Gazza?* from Gallimard; one

of WH Smith's thin, ambitious women (formerly of paper-clips) has been on the telephone to Gallimard from Swindon, hoping to satisfy the store's clamouring customers with a bulk purchase of *Que signifie Gazza?* and Blacker has lost his temper on radio and television with anyone who has described the book as funny - not that anyone has.

Never mind. This week, Blacker is attending the Hay-on-Wye literary festival, as serious novelists do, allowing me to step into the limelight and put the record straight - my first attempt being with Professor Taylor on Radio 4's *Afternoon Shift*.

"This book," said Professor Taylor, "*The Meaning of Cantona* ..." "Very funny, don't you think?" I said.

Professor Taylor drew back and looked at me warily. "That hadn't occurred to me," he said. "You don't know where I could get a copy of *Que signifie Gazza?* do you?"

the leader page

What is there for Blair in the famous handbag?

Way back when, when Tony Blair was a backbench Labour MP in short trousers, he asked Margaret Thatcher a question in the House of Commons. It was a rather unequal exchange, as the domineering Prime Minister brushed aside the whippet-eager newcomer, but it offered a premonition of the future. Despite the ideological chasm between the two sides of the House, Mrs Thatcher claimed to be pursuing the policies of the 1944 White Paper which set out the consensual goal of full employment. "I have a copy in my handbag," she said, pulling it out and reading a well-chosen paragraph.

Thus Mr Blair not only made her handbag famous, but, in the teeth of her growing reputation for bellicose divisiveness, put his finger on an aspect of values they shared in common.

Her handbag was back in Downing Street last Thursday, for a very different encounter. He has made it clear that her style of leadership is a model for him. She has basked in the glow of his admiration, returning the compliments with interest. This was the "most formidable" Labour leader since Gaiskell, a man who "won't let Britain down".

As a public relations coup, the meeting was sensational. It was the act of a supremely self-confident politician. It identified him with Britain's most powerful recent leader. If there was anything in her handbag this time, it was Essence

of National Leadership, and she poured it into Mr Blair's tanks. She may never have been widely popular, but she was respected, and especially so by a large section of the electorate that Mr Blair won over on 1 May and on to which he intends to hold. The meeting sent an important signal to this group, all part of New Labour's professional after-sales service. And it sent a signal abroad: nice guy, can tell you how to win elections — but watch out. They all remember the handbag too.

There were other signals. Other former prime ministers have not been consulted. John Major's offer of advice on something he thought he was really good at — negotiating with European partners — has not been taken up. James Callaghan's telephone has been strangely silent, except when the BBC rings.

But what of the substance of the Blair-Thatcher summit? Is Mr Blair likely to have learnt anything? Sure, "she is still a figure on the world stage and knows many of the leading players", as a Labour source explained. But there is nothing she can tell him about how to handle world leaders that will not be in the Foreign Office brief. And, certainly, she has a reputation for resolution and firm decision-making, but her alleged advice to decide what is important and not fight on "ground on which you cannot win" is both banal and unnecessary. Mr Blair has demonstrated, as much in three weeks of gov-



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ernment as in three years of opposition, that he is exceptionally sure-footed.

She did, however, have one important thing to say. That Robin Cook, she reportedly complained — he didn't even mention the Special Relationship with the United States in his "mission statement" for the Foreign Office (she cannot like mission statements, however much a product of her time they were).

It is true that the US did not feature in the five priorities of Labour foreign policy outlined by the Foreign Secretary. Although Mr Cook did promise, at his video-enhanced news conference, that relations with Washington would

be better than under the Tories. And he had a sound basis for this claim, in the shape of Mr Blair's next important visitor to Number 10, Bill Clinton, who arrives on Thursday.

The conversation between Mr Blair and Mr Clinton is likely to be more substantive than last Thursday's courtesies. Whatever the cross-party affinities between Mr Blair and Lady Thatcher, Tony and Bill share a common "project" — coming from the left to govern from the centre. But she drew attention to one of many unresolved, subterranean questions about the new government: what has happened to Labour anti-

Americanism? Mr Cook, one suspects, retains a stronger streak of it than some, whereas the New Labour core — Blair, Brown, Mandelson — are personally and politically pro-American.

This matters, because Lady Thatcher is right — although for the wrong reasons. There does need to be a strong British-American relationship. But what is special about it is that the United Kingdom both is in Europe and speaks English. Britain should have a pivotal role as the gateway between America and the European Union. It is not simply a matter of language, but that our two countries share fundamental beliefs about liberal economics. Whereas on the Continent liberty is a political concept, for Anglo-Saxon capitalists political freedom is founded on economic freedom. Lady Thatcher understands that, but cannot grasp that America is not interested in Britain except as a member of the EU.

That is a message Mr Clinton will underline this week. He and Mr Blair will discuss Northern Ireland and Hong Kong, but the real talking will be about Europe. For the President, a single European currency is a tricky local detail: the big picture is wider European integration, and he is in favour of it. He wants stability in central and eastern Europe, and Russia safely moored alongside. Last week he talked about Nato enlargement and the agreement with Russia giving the chance of "a frame-

work of an undivided, democratic Europe" but added that this would need more economic — and, crucially, political — integration to succeed.

This is not what Lady Thatcher means by a Special Relationship, but, for all the presentational brilliance of last Thursday's "secrecy" chat, this Thursday's conversation in Downing Street will be a much better guide to the future.

Get stuck in to Shakespeare

The Globe reopens tomorrow after 355 years, to give us Shakespeare before he was pushed up and turned into school textbooks. The actors will speak faster, in "proto-cockney" accents. For the generation brought up on videos, lacking an open-air fast-forward button, heckling will be encouraged to liven up the boring bits. In the 16th century, actors were hurried on to the speeches the audience enjoyed, and took requests for repeats. Snacks and drinks will be served throughout and whores will ply their trade in the gods (well, no, perhaps you can take authenticity too far). Go, celebrate the end of all that stuffy stuff, the languorous delivery, the shushing and the tisking and the full lit crit in the bar at the interval, and get stuck into some low-minded revelry.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Don't blame the helpless ME patient

Sir, Suzanne Moore's article "The secret fears of the ME generation" (23 May) is a welcome addition to the ongoing debate. However, there would have been greater clarity if ME could have been presented as a multi-causal illness. Arguing for one cause, in this case psychological, over and above others, is too one-dimensional. This has grave consequences when it comes to the appropriateness of different treatments, for different sub-groups.

It is not that our members see mental illness as a shameful diagnosis to be avoided under the cloak of ME. It is instead that they have to contend with distressing neurological symptoms which remain unrecognised and untreated. Then the psychological factors really do kick in, stemming from isolation and despair.

Let's finally admit that the helplessness and loss of control routinely felt by those with ME, from having an illness which is misunderstood, is equally a factor for those trying to help them. Doctors, when confronted by ME, are forced to face the fact that their traditional understanding of causation and treatment may not be applicable. Could it be that they fall back on "blaming the patient" and the "ME lobby" rather than themselves?

GILL JACOBS
Director
Action for ME
Wells, Somerset

Sir: I am sure I am not the only person who has had some kind of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) who finds Suzanne Moore's glib attempt at intellectualising and applying cultural diagnosis to the illness highly offensive.

CFS affected me for 18 months severely and three years after that chronically. Only now, having recovered, can I see how much it disabled me. I do not know where it came from, but it was ghastly. I am sure it was some kind of nervous disorder, but whether the cause was internal or external to myself or a combination I am still unsure.

What I can state is that I did feel optimistic and happy in myself when CFS symptoms first occurred. I was not as Ms Moore implies "sick and tired of life". It was only after a long time and when I began to feel that the symptoms would not go away that the kind of outlook on life Ms Moore expects is the root cause began to develop. The alienation I began to feel was not helped by glib hypotheses about my condition from others who had not been where I then was.

CFS meant that I spent my mid-twenties looking fine but feeling how I expected to feel when I was 30. Unless you have experienced it you cannot imagine what it feels like. Everyday experience of lethargy, listlessness and frustration does not prepare one for it.

MELVIN GOLDSMITH
Chelmsford, Essex

Sir: ME is not an illness of the mid-Eighties. It simply became more recognised at that time. In the 19th century people such as Charles Darwin and Florence Nightingale had its symptoms.

ROGER DAVIES
London SE9

Burn away the dioxin threat

Sir: Reducing the amount of dioxins in our diet, while certainly highly desirable, will not be achieved in the way proposed by Dr Elliott (Letters, 20 May). It is necessary to consider all the ways in which dioxins enter the food chain.

Waste combustion, unlike many other processes, is closely monitored and has to meet very strict emission standards, as she points out. Older incinerators have been closed, and waste combustion is today not significant among known sources of dioxin (A Review of Dioxin Emissions in the UK, HMIP 1995). There are of course in addition many unknown and entirely unregulated sources.

The only way dioxins can be destroyed is by combustion. Modern energy-from-waste power stations are not destroyers of dioxin and opposition to them on emission grounds is counter-productive. Combustion of waste that cannot be recycled is an essential component of the drive towards more sustainable waste management and the attainment of renewable energy targets. That is why it is encouraged in the UK, as in most European countries.

RAY PALIN
Director, Energy from Waste
Association
London W2

Sir: As a pregnant woman it is hard to express the confusion and despondency I face knowing that my diligent efforts to breast-feed my newborn baby will deliver to him alarming levels of dioxins and PCBs, both known carcinogens and hormone disruptors.

Reading Dr Elliott's letter (20 May) caused me to wonder what if anything I could do to reduce the dioxin level that I store in my body fat. Reduce my meat intake? Dairy intake? Move as far away from waste incineration sites as possible?

Or maybe I should ignore the advice of health professionals and switch to formula milk. Formula milk, however, we are told, contains phthalates, more hormone-disrupting chemicals, delivered to our babies courtesy of the plastics industry.

Clearly, there is nothing I can now do to protect my baby from this contamination. I will indeed breast-feed this baby, however uneasily. But please, let sense prevail and have this new government take action to ban PVC production and curb the use of incinerators to dispose of waste.

LAUREN BROMLEY HODGE
London W14

Building abuse

Sir: Arthur Sait (Letters, 19 May) need have no fears if he is genuinely self-employed since the Inland Revenue and the Contributions Agency are doing no more than reiterate rules that have been in existence since the 1970s. As long ago as 1983 the all-party Committee on Public Accounts was expressing extreme concern at the abuse of the 74 self-employed certificate scheme for the construction industry.

During the recession that abuse

became more widespread as employers, in an effort to cut costs, forced existing employees into "self-employment". The "employer" saved on NI contributions, statutory bank holiday payments and sick pay. The quasi-self-employed workers found that they were not entitled to unemployment benefit when they could not find work, and that the insurance policies they had taken out to cover redundancies did not, of course, recognise the "redundancy" of the self-employed. All this combined to force many skilled workers out of the industry.

What is now happening is the withdrawal of a hidden subsidy to the construction industry in lost revenue in tax and NI contributions which was, in 1984, estimated to be between £4bn and £6bn each year.

B J CAIRNS
London N22

Secret of success

Sir: One of the arguments used by republicans is that the institution of monarchy is somehow incompatible with modernity and growth. How strange, then, to see in the World Economics Forum's report on global competitiveness (report, 21 May) that of the 20 most competitive nations 11 are monarchies and another, Hong Kong, is a crown colony.

DONALD FOREMAN
Secretary-General
The Monarchist League
London WC1

Slaughter by mines will go on

Sir: Only the naive and ill-informed will applaud the decision by the Government to ban the trade in landmines (report, 22 May), believing that this will result in a cessation of their use and an end to the casualties caused by these insidious devices.

Landmine warfare is a complex and emotive subject not entirely understood by princesses and politicians, except where publicity is sought that may help to focus public opinion on the carnage wreaked by the indiscriminate use of these weapons.

Britain's ban on landmines may be laudable, but the world powers have little or no interest in engaging in a crusade for the removal of millions of such devices in countries which offer no political or economic advantage in return. The Gulf battlefields straddle vast oil resources. Bosnia does not, and mine-clearance in the Third World has become the prerogative of Western Christian charity groups.

The clearance of minefields should be seen as a global problem requiring a global solution. A similar programme to that developed by the World Health Organisation to eradicate smallpox seems to offer a model for action if the multilateral will could be found. In the meantime, casualties will continue as a visible reminder of political instability in the Third World and vast greed

and almost unbelievable hypocrisy in the West.

T G OLIVER
Assault Engineer, Royal Marines
(retired)
Exmouth, Devon

Deaf need more than £33 a week

Sir: The House of Lords' decision in the case of Rebecca Halliday ("Woman deaf since birth wins new deal for disabled", 22 May) is important for its recognition of the communication needs of deaf people. However, its effect in extending opportunity and choice for deaf people will be largely symbolic. In practical terms, an allowance of £33 per week would purchase two hours of interpreting.

This judgment will not resolve the fundamental problem of the shortage of registered qualified sign-language interpreters — there are fewer than 100 in the UK — or the lack of funding for training more of them.

STEWART SIMPSON
Chief Executive
Council for the Advancement of
Communication with Deaf People
Dartford

Fat chance

Sir: I find it most refreshing that Barbie's new friend is portrayed in a wheelchair (report, 22 May). However, what would be truly radical is if any of Barbie's friends looked anything other than anorexic. Or is the idea of a cuddly doll just too shocking?

ANDY PEARSON
Liverpool

Nothing chic about heroin

Sir: I feel compelled to respond to your article "A smack in the face for gurus of heroin chic" (23 May), which featured an image of my recent catwalk show.

I was dismayed to find that the photograph had been used to give the impression that I was both glamourising and condoning heroin. It is too easy to jump to conclusions.

Every season I design clothes that are inspired by the people I see around me, particularly in London. This city has always been a fundamental starting point for music, fashion and style worldwide, and my show was designed to highlight one area of London's eclectic tastes.

Putting models in black dresses, with unkempt hair and ravaged make-up, does not necessarily mean they are on smack. It's "just a look", it's "whatever", it's kids out having a good time, it's Generation X. Maybe to some this is the classic face of addiction, but the irony is that a true addict would almost always go unnoticed in a crowd.

Don't turn us all as witches. Before blaming the fashion industry for glamourising an addiction, society should ask itself why there is such a problem today. If this issue was intelligently dealt with I would be the first to give my support.

ROLAND MOURET
Designer
People Corporation
London N1

Sir: Treatment for drug use is one sure way of reducing public expenditure (Letters, 22 May). It reduces crime, improves health and provides positive role models to influence continuing misers.

One obstacle in the present purchaser/provider system of both health and social care is the division in purchasing between health authorities and local authorities. Another is the short-term attitude of many health authorities, who continue the policy of buying detoxification without the vital overlapping treatment necessary to effect a profound change in a state of mind.

The result is a wasteful revolving door of relapse and further detoxification.

The first phase from the new drug tsar should be to end that division and to order realistic reassessment of the total expenditure throughout his or her imperial domain.

NICK BARTON
Chairman
European Association for the
Treatment of Addiction (UK)
London SE11

Innit or ain't it?

Sir: I have to correct Arthur Pottersman's cockney abbreviations (Letter, 21 May). I was born in Brompton and have lived all my life in SE1.

Innit and arsed are definitely creole patois. The cockney ain't it and arsed it. The cockney ain't it is used at either end of sentences as a question: "Ain't it cold arsed?" or "It's cold arsed, ain't it?" The creole innit is used as punctuation at the end of sentences: "I got a new car, innit." Translated into cockney, that becomes, "I got a new car, didn't I?"

The cockney dialect would have variations, such as didn't it, ain't I. In creole, there is just one innit.

PAT CROBIN
London SE1

Kevin Watkins (left)

The West can halt Africa's slide



Fifty years ago the Marshall Plan rebuilt Europe. But five years on the Rio Summit is a failure. Kevin Watkins (left) and Nicholas Schoon (below) ask if international co-operation is dead

The West can halt Africa's slide

One of the most important anniversaries of the post-war era is passing unnoticed. Fifty years ago this month the launch of the Marshall Plan helped to lay the foundations of economic recovery in Europe. It is a stark reminder of the failure of political leaders in the industrialised world to provide a vision for global co-operation in the 21st century.

The Marshall Plan was rooted in a sense of enlightened US self-interest. With Germany and much of continental Europe in ruins, the spectre of a Third-World-style mass unemployment, instability and future conflict loomed large. Reading the debates which accompanied the Marshall Plan one is struck by the fact that the case for assistance to Europe was couched not in terms of aid, but of hard-nosed investment. Failure to support recovery in Europe, so the argument ran, would undermine markets for American exports, and cost jobs at home.

At the time the plan was agreed, the US was delivering two per cent of its national income to assist European recovery, laying the foundations for two decades of unprecedented growth. Today, when America's wealth is three times greater, it is providing one 20th of this amount in development assistance to the world's poorest countries.

It is a similar picture elsewhere. As a group the OECD countries have spent the Nineties emulating their aid budgets, with particularly damaging consequences for sub-Saharan Africa. Developing assistance flows to the region have fallen by a quarter since 1992. Meanwhile, a catastrophic slump in prices for primary commodity exports has wiped an estimated five per cent off regional GDP since the early Eighties. Add to this lethal combination a crushing foreign debt and you have the ingredients of a disaster.

On average, African incomes have been falling by one per cent a year since 1980. As living standards in much of Asia and parts of Latin America forge ahead, Africa is becoming a continent apart. In 30 years, per capita income has halved from an already low base. The result is that preventable infectious disease claims the lives of almost one in five children. More than 40 million children are not in primary school and the numbers are rising.

Can Africa's apparently relentless slide be halted? New hope is emerging in the region itself. In countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda and Mozambique, a new generation of self-confident leaders is emerging. They are committed to breaking the shackles of dependence and forging a more self-reliant future. In a handful of countries economic recovery is taking fragile root.

Yet the obstacles remain formidable, with governments lacking the resources to restore the social and economic infrastructures needed to sustain growth.

International support for Africa's recovery efforts remains lamentably inadequate. Next month, the Clinton administration plans to launch an Africa Growth and Opportunity Plan. Marshall Plan it is not. Reduced to its essentials, the US initiative offers limited trade preferences, no new aid, and vague pledges of private capital flows. Africa needs much more. It needs an international plan of action which removes the crippling burden of debt and mobilises investment finance for economic infrastructure, health and education.

The British government could help to make such an agenda possible. It should challenge the Clinton administration to accept deeper and earlier debt relief under the IMF-World Bank debt initiative. And it could use the Doha summit to call for an international effort - to raise the cash to get Africa's children back in school, making education a priority abroad as at home.

Reversing Africa's marginalisation will not be cost free. Then again, neither is the alternative. Rising poverty is fuelling social and political tensions across the region, culminating in extreme cases in the collapse of states, with devastating humanitarian consequences for Africa and the rest of the world. The question for the international community is whether it wants to respond to the growing number of crises that will follow Rwanda, Liberia and Zaire. Or whether it wants to seize the opportunities for peace, stability and self-reliance which are now emerging.

The writer is Oxfam's senior policy adviser



Global warning - too much hot air

They're at it again, those world leaders. In four weeks Bill and Tony, Helmut and Jacques and some 60 other prime ministers and presidents will be in New York to talk big about saving the Earth. The occasion: the follow-up to the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Only a few specialists can remember what was decided back then in Brazil, but most people will vaguely recall the event as the mother of all summits. It seemed to go on for an awfully long time - nearly two weeks - and more than 150 heads of state and government dropped in, attended by thousands of journalists, diplomats, civil servants and experts. And now, as the fifth anniversary rolls around, world leaders have been persuaded they should mark the event with another great gathering and a 23,000-word text saying what ought to be done.

But why on earth bother? What is the point of all that foreign travel, those motorcade cavalcades through Manhattan, when the gap between rhetoric and reality is so wide and growing. Since Rio, the globe has had five years of expanding trade and furious but patchy economic growth. Many countries, and most of one continent - Africa - have been left out. The gap between rich and poor nations has grown, and so has the gap between rich and poor within countries.

The serious global environmental crises they speccified on in Brazil have deepened - the destruction of forests, freshwater shortages, worldwide overfishing and mass extinction of species to name just four. As the population continues to soar, both poverty and wealth destroy nature's life-support systems. Poor people strip forests for firewood and erode the soil. The affluent want more cars and air travel, more air conditioning, electricity and space. But as we mess up our relationship with nature, knowing we are storing up trouble ahead, we are all in this together. We all have to make changes and the rich have to help the poor.

George, John, Helmut and Francois and more than 100 other leaders recognised this in Brazil back in 1992. "States shall co-operate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem," they promised in the Rio Declaration. At the same time, the developed nations made a rather vague undertaking, in a new UN climate treaty, to bring their rising annual emissions of climate-changing "greenhouse gases" back to their 1990 level by the year 2000.

With three years to go, it is now certain that most are going to break their word. Since 1992 emissions from rich nations have kept on rising

even as we begin to see the first signs of man-made climate change around the world. There is now indisputably a real risk of harmful climate shifts during the adult lives of today's children. And as we keep on burning more and more fossil fuels, as greenhouse gases keep on building up in the atmosphere, the changes in rainfall, temperatures, winds and ocean currents will grow with each passing decade.

The developed nations, which have caused most of the pollution to date, are not willing to do anything really effective about it. To act decisively might be politically unpopular. It might knock half a per cent off their annual economic growth. And anyway, they can be pretty confident that the poor nations will suffer much more from climate shifts than the rich. Meanwhile the growth in emissions from developing countries such as China is even more rapid as they use ever more oil, gas and coal to industrialise.

'After Rio, there appears to be more of a spirit of "I'm all right, Jack" than of world partnership'

So, not much global partnership there. Now look what has happened to overseas aid from rich to poor. At Rio in 1992 the developed countries said they "reaffirm their commitments to reach the accepted United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Product for overseas development assistance". At the time they were giving 0.34 per cent of their collective GNP to the poor nations; overseas aid has fallen to 0.27 per cent since. Britain's foreign aid has also been falling and now stands at 0.27 per cent of GNP.

Of course, foreign aid alone could never save the world from ecological crises. Indeed, bad aid schemes - like the UK-funded Pergau dam in Malaysia - have done great environmental and social damage. But the overall volume of official government aid, raised from the taxpayers of rich nations for the world's poor, signals the strength of the feelings of solidarity among the travellers on Spaceship Earth. Clearly business class wants little to do with economy.

So, five years on, there appears to be more of a spirit of "I'm all right, Jack" than of global partnership. There is, alas, little reason to hope that next month's Earth Summit II in New York, a week-long Special Session of the UN General

Assembly, will change things. The world leaders will each make a speech while their ministers, officials and diplomats haggle over the precise contents of a long, impenetrable text, full of 100-word sentences and sub-clauses. Like Rio's 400-page Agenda 21, it says what ought to be done - but it does not legally bind nations and few people will ever read it.

They are also expected to produce a much shorter, punchier "political" declaration. The consultation draft of this says the world's prime ministers and presidents now "pledge to work together in good faith and in the spirit of partnership to achieve our commitments. We decide to move now from words to deeds".

If only... but don't hold your breath. And the fault is as much ours as theirs. Ours in the media, in that we treat such summits as important events if our own leader goes along. We report the rhetoric, get swept up with the whole idea of the big chiefs jelling in to work together on solving big problems, when the reality is quite different. From the leaders' point of view it is mainly about image. Merely to turn up and make a speech is to show their concern for the global environment. They don't actually meet as a group to debate and problem solve at all. They fly back home, and whatever they said is soon forgotten.

It is also the fault of us, the electorate. The reason the politicians get away with cutting overseas aid, with renegeing on their promises to protect the Earth's climate, is because they pick up the signals that we have more immediate priorities - like cheap energy and low taxes.

These Earth Summit failures are not the end of the world. Across the planet, in the absence of grand global agreements which change anything, millions of problems are being solved at lower levels by individual nations, cities and villages, businesses and families. People are constantly discovering how to exploit nature sustainably because they recognise that they will suffer if they don't. There are myriad solutions and amid the overall environmental decline there have been thousands of little success stories and a few big ones.

But on several global environmental issues, notably climate change, only concerted international action can work. What use is it if Britain cuts its global warming emissions by 20 per cent by 2010 (as the new Government is as yet unconvincedly pledged to do) if the rest of the world fails to act? We produce only three per cent of global emissions, so it would make not a blind bit of difference. Earth summits, then, ought to be more than just hot air - and we should neither forgive nor forget when they are.

Trains and phones and strains

I recently discovered I have abnormally high blood pressure. My doctor says it's how much I drink, my relative lack of exercise, and stress. In one small sector of my life there seems to be enough of this to generate blood pressure off the Richter scale.

I commute to London from Surrey. It is about an hour's journey by train that started their lives in the days when businessmen wore bowler hats. The trains are dirty, draughty and unreliable, but all that is tolerable. Many of the people who travel on them are another matter. Their common characteristic is total contempt for the rest of the world.

These sociopaths are not always easily recognisable, but anyone wearing a tie with a repeat pattern of teddy bears or ducks or some other puerile device should be regarded with suspicion. They are almost certainly mobile-phonists. Mobile-phone use is an addiction. Just as smokers get into their compartment and light up, so mobile users immediately reach for their phones to satisfy their craving.

Soon the whole carriage is alive with inane one-sided conversations. "Hi! It's me. You're all cracky..." and so on, and always at the top of their voices. Eventually all is quiet, until the incoming calls start. Telephones sound with a hideous medley of bleeps, chimes and even dopy tunes. Those summoned adopt a self-satisfied smirk: "Hi! - I've just got to Woking..."

On inward journeys in the morning, one software executive rabbiting into his mobile for half an hour or more can make working or reading a book an impossibility. One is forced against one's wishes to take a vicarious part in a conversation of barely literate business-speak or in the pursuit, via Sharon in the office, of Mark or Darren, who may be at home or at the Croydon branch or on his mobile.

The briefcase is clearly as devastating as the mobile. They have two main functions in the wrong hands. If you sit next to the door, the man with the fireproof briefcase is your chief enemy. No matter how hard you try to twist your legs under the seat, two out of four briefcases boarding the train will smash into your knees. Once aboard, all briefcases are dumped in the gangway, making movement up and down an impossibility.

There was a time when louts in baseball hats would put their feet up on the bench seat opposite if it was empty. Now it is commonplace for louts in suits

Wheeler on Wheeler



The front-page cartoonist of 'The Independent' as he sees himself

or louts in dresses to put their feet on the seat next to other passengers. It can only be a matter of time before it will be accepted for the old, or those otherwise perceived as unlikely to protest, to support a couple of muddy shoes on their laps for the duration of the journey.

Strangely, these selfish and thoughtless customs are not confined to one social type. I recently saw an elderly and expensively dressed woman with her feet on the seat opposite. She was reading *The Spectator*. I often try to work out ways of hitting back, but it's not easy.

Moving to another seat is the most effective, because a direct challenge is asking for at least verbal and possibly physical trouble. Certainly the feet-on-the-seat phenomenon is now accepted practice. I have watched countless guards walk past offenders. Short of taking one's own disposable seat cover, one has to accept that one's seat is used regularly as a doormat.

I recently enquired from several shops selling electronic gadgets in the Tottenham Court Road about the possibility of purchasing a mobile-phone jamming device. The assistants react variously. Shocked disbelief is the most frequent; certainly no one has reached under the counter and produced what I need. I imagine something portable, but in mahogany and brass with bits of coiled copper wire. Anything but black plastic.

I would be happy to pay a substantial sum for such a device. No price would be too high for a bit of peace and quiet on the train. It might even lower my blood pressure to somewhere near normal.

Miles Kingston is on holiday.

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Mark Simpson

Agents with a secret come out at last

How many people can keep a secret? How many people can lead a double life? About 20,000 think they can. That's the number of people who responded to MI5's first public advertisement for recruits last week. Those among them who happen to be homosexual need not, however, keep that secret any longer. After designating homosexuals a security risk for most of its history, MI5 has relented and embraced equal opportunity. The gay weekly *Pink Paper* was informed that homosexuals would be welcome to apply.

And, of course, homosexuals have historically made great secret service operatives. In danger of discovery most of their lives, they received the most intense and rigorous training

anyone could hope for. Burgess, Maclean and Blunt were some of the best spies we ever had.

Unfortunately they happened to be battling for the other team in more ways than one. Which is the only reason we ever heard about their homosexuality. If they had restricted themselves to looking for reds under the bed, instead of getting in with them, their colleagues would have kept quiet about their sexual preference, as they did with the many other queer members of the intelligence community, including Sir Maurice Oldfield, the former head of MI6 who later admitted he was homosexual. Once made public, the sexual treachery of these men shaded easily into their political treachery, their willingness to serve

a foreign power a function of their foreign orientation.

In the out-in-the-open Nineties, where homosexuality is no longer an occult phenomenon, MI5's decision looks like a common-sense solution to the catch-22 situation. We can't employ homosexuals because they're a security risk. Why? Because they're open to blackmail threats? Why? Because we would sack them if we found out they're homosexual.

But ironically, as homosexuality becomes less of a stigma and less of a secret vice, homosexuals may not be so interested in the secret service game, with its Byzantine mysteries and deceptions.

Homosexuals used to be one of the most important symbols of the dichotomy between the public and

the private, the secret and the explicit. They were tolerated only on condition of their "discretion". Nowadays they seem to be applauded for their indiscretion. In the past few years the most private of creatures has become the most public. In soap operas, films, tabloid newspapers - and now MI5 - the "out" homosexual has become the symbol of the compulsory transparency of our times.

But no matter how transparent a homosexual you are, there are always more secrets to be told. Julian Clary, perhaps the most public and obvious homosexual in the country, was "outed" on the front page of a Sunday paper yesterday. For having had a heterosexual affair.



Anthony Blunt: in bed with the reds

obituaries / gazette

Ronald Hastings

Ronald Hastings came into his own as one of Fleet Street's earliest and most amusing pre-viewers of television programmes. For years there had been critics of television whose comments were published the morning after, but increasingly the casual viewer felt the need for tips on what to see and what to skip in that day's programmes.

With his dry wit, acerbic style and quiet authority as a critic he gained (some people said) a wide readership and more influence than the morning-after writers.

No one was more surprised than Hastings at his fan mail, or more amused by his apparent popularity as a previewer since he had spent many years as the *Daily Telegraph's* Theatre Correspondent, anticipating in a weekly column the following week's theatrical openings but rarely writing reviews himself.

Inheriting the theatre correspondent's job from the legendary George Bishop (one of James Agate's loyalist colleagues), the almost equally tall Hastings may never have felt as powerful as a theatrical reporter as he did with his television tips; but his decades of first-nighting had been in many ways more congenial.

In those days a critic only had an hour or so and sometimes much less to file his notice from the fall of the curtain, whereas Hastings could always stay to the end. His job was to hobnob in the foyer with everyone and anyone, before or

family audiences to its open-ended stage in the city, and in the regions a rash of new provincial theatres was rising on the rates.

It was a heady time in Fleet Street for theatre writers and the stately Hastings with his pipe, umbrella and imperious manner (he might have been the man from Scotland Yard in an old-fashioned whodunnit, or an English Monsieur Hulot in his deadpan way of rising above fellow first-nighters) cut an imposing figure of some authority.

It was a manner which assisted all his journalism for which he had prepared himself by reading English at Balliol, after wartime service in the RAF and stints on Kent newspapers.

Joining the *Telegraph* in 1955 after two years on the *Daily Mail*, he covered the Lewisham rail disaster as a special reporter, and within 24 hours was giving reasons on the front page why it had happened.

After walking along the broken tracks with his friend the cricketeer Colin Cowdrey, he asked the Waterloo authorities to assemble the chief operating superintendent, the chief signalling officer, locomotive engineers and other departmental heads for a meeting. The Southern Region agreed that afternoon following the accident, in which 90 people died, and Hastings alone was able to discuss with those executives, over large maps spread on a table, what had gone wrong.

"We'd like to use this on the front," said his editor Colin Coole, adding suspiciously, "Is it all right? Have the other papers got it?"

"No. Why not?" "Lack of initiative, I suppose," replied Hastings. "They overthought it, or that they could go so high." A subsequent public inquiry confirmed the truth and the facts of his account.

Hastings never hesitated to show initiative. As a reporter on the *Daily Mail* he had heard one of Billy Graham's assistants boasting that the evangelist sometimes addressed as many as 30,000 people. "I could get you double that number," said Hastings. He rang Ted Drake, the Chelsea manager, whom he did not know but who agreed to invite Graham to the match for the interval. On the crowded terraces a few days later Hastings grinned at "how easy the impossible sometimes is".

Among other strings to Hastings' bow were longcase clocks (he had several notable examples), opera (he came from a musical family, golf (he died on a Twickenham golf course), tennis (while playing at Nassau during the war he recalled with amusement the Duchess of Windsor's unimpaired language on a neighbouring court when she missed a shot), ancient cars and railways. He kept an 80 gauge model railway - Southern Region - in a room at his home at Barnes.

While his heart would remain in the theatre and opera, the switch to television which had grown steadily in its influence during his 35 years on the *Telegraph* brought its rewards not only with an increased salary but also in the daily proof how close he had got to his readers, especially when he was ill in 1989.

Adam Benedict

Ronald Arthur Hastings, journalist; born Strood, Kent 14 November 1922; staff, *Daily Telegraph* 1955-89; married 1945 Vida Staples (one son, one daughter, and one son deceased); died Twickenham, Middlesex 1 May 1997.



Hastings: stately

behind the scenes, whether at Stratford-upon-Avon or Glyndebourne, Chichester or the West End. He began with *My Fair Lady* at Drury Lane in 1958.

It was a time of sweeping changes in the British theatre which Hastings heralded in a weekly column and elsewhere with a detachment and accuracy which won him much professional respect. Considered to be the playgoer's preferred daily paper, the *Telegraph* was generously disposed towards its coverage of the stage both at home and overseas, and Hastings got wind of most events. Rangio from the last years of the most famous commercial manager of the era (Hugh "Binkie" Beaumont) to the New Wave of angry young men at the Royal Court, the battles with the Lord Chamberlain as censor, the rivalry of Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop and the Arts Council's distribution of grants which brought artistic directors a new power, he had plenty of subject matter.

The Royal Shakespeare Company was to have not one but two theatres in London to add to its repertoire from Stratford-upon-Avon under Peter Hall's controversial leadership and Laurence Olivier's long-awaited National Theatre was due for a trial run at a new theatre in the round at Chichester.

Meanwhile Bernard Miles's Mermaid Theatre was drawing

bunch that included Peacock, Attenborough and Singer. Brian's special flair was to improve and enlarge upon the programme proposals one took to him. We were always collaborators (even gleeful conspirators on occasion) and never master



Bottom line, honey... Carpenter as Miss One leads the celebrations of the wicked witch Evermean's death in the 1978 film *The Wizard of Oz*

Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

Thelma Carpenter

The phrase "Black is Beautiful" could have been inspired by the petite Thelma Carpenter, whose exquisite face and melodic voice delighted cabaret and theatre audiences for more than 50 years. A noted interpreter of the great standard songs, she was as fearless as she was stylish, feistily standing up for herself, even in night-clubs run by the Mafia.

As a child, the Harlem-born Thelma sang in the streets for coins, and appeared on *Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour*, a hugely popular radio series that also gave Frank Sinatra his first break. At 15 she entered another amateur contest, at the Apollo Theatre in New York, where her singing of "Stormy Weather" won her a week's booking.

In 1939 the superb pianist Teddy Wilson, shortly after leaving Benny Goodman, formed his own big band, and invited Carpenter to provide the

vocals. Boasting such musicians as Ben Webster, J.C. Heard and Doc Cheatham, the band set an awesome standard of musicianship, but lasted only a year. Wilson next made a magnificent series of small-group recordings, featuring, among others, Carpenter and her friend Billie Holiday. Their friendship even survived Holiday's addiction to heroin. As Carpenter told the writer Donald Clarke: "At first, I thought 'I don't need to be around that stuff, but my mother said to me, 'Now's the time she needs a friend.' So I used to go around and see her."

After singing with the bands of Coleman Hawkins and Count Basie, Carpenter replaced Dinah Shore on Eddie Cantor's radio series, despite pressure from Cantor's sponsors over a black performer appearing with whites. She sang in black clubs all over the New York area until 1944, when she played her first white night-club,

Le Ruban Bleu, on East 56th Street.

Her cabaret success led to a role in the Broadway musical *Memphis Bound* (1945), which starred Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. A re-setting of *HMS Pinafore* on a Mississippi showboat, it was scattered after 36 performances. Far more successful (it ran a year) was the Arthur Schwartz/Howard Dietz revue *Inside USA* (1948), which co-starred Beatrice Lillie and Jack Haley. An ill-advised revival of the 1931 show *Shuffle Along* (1952) lasted only four performances, but the rowdy musical *Ankles Aweigh* (1955) managed 22 weeks.

By 1967 *Holla, Dolly!* had been running on Broadway for three years, and was playing to ever-diminishing audiences. David Merrick, the show's producer, decided to present an all-black version, starring Pearl Bailey and Cab Calloway, with Carpenter hired as Bailey's

standby. Suddenly, *Dolly!* was a hit all over again, but, as Bailey tended to miss a great many performances, Carpenter played the role of Dolly Levi more than 100 times.

The long-running *Bubbling Brown Sugar* (1976) was her favourite show, as it commemorated a place and time she knew well: Harlem between the First and Second World Wars.

At the age of 58 Carpenter finally made her motion picture debut in *The Wiz* (1978), the all-black remake of *The Wizard of Oz*, based on the hit Broadway show. With the 34-year-old Diana Ross calamitously miscast as a repressed 24-year-old Harlem Dorothy, the film dragged along glumly until Carpenter burst on to the screen as the good witch Miss One, congratulating Dorothy for inadvertently killing the Wicked Witch of the East ("Bottom line, honey - this chick put the 'ugh'!

in 'ugh'!") and then, flanked by dancing, hula-hooping Munchkins on skateboards, launched into the funky "He's the Wizard!"

She also appeared in Francis Ford Coppola's film *The Cotton Club* (1984), and on television in *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *The Cosby Show* and *The Love Boat*. She played the meddling mother-in-law in *Barfot in the Park* (1970-71), an all-black situation comedy based on Neil Simon's play. She recently toured in the musical *Pippin*.

"I never married," Thelma Carpenter told a journalist at the age of 50. "Although you might say I've done lots of heavy rooming and light housekeeping in my time, I like life."

Dick Vosburgh

Thelma Carpenter, singer and actress; born New York 15 January 1920; died New York 15 May 1997.

John Browell

The milestone in John Browell's production career in BBC Light Entertainment was *The Goon Show*.

Its original producer was Dennis Main Wilson, who produced the first and second series. It then passed to Peter Eton, who remained sane enough to cope with series three to seven (with some help from Pat Dixon). Series eight had to be dealt with by three other producers and, because of a lack of discipline, a permanent producer with a firm hand had to be found to deal with the vagaries of the show. Enter John Browell - who then produced the ninth and tenth series, from 3 November 1958 to 28 January 1960, to be the end of the show's crazy run. There was a sequel, *The Last Goon Show of All*, in 1972, which was also produced by Browell.

Although he was born in Poplar, London, Browell's family moved to Leeds, where he went to school, learnt to play the violin and saxophone, and went to work for Barclays Bank. With the rumblings of the Second World War ahead he volunteered for the Royal Air Force and became a wireless mechanic. Being a musician soon led him to entertainments. He saw service mainly in Ceylon, where he combined his duties as wireless mechanic and entertainments officer, and it was during this period that he met his wife, Rita, who was a WAAF wireless operator.

Upon demob Browell, by now fired with entertainment expertise, had no wish to return to his former bank job. He visited the BBC premises in Leeds and enquired about vacancies. Yes, he was told, there were jobs in London for studio managers if that would be suitable.

Browell sailed with ease through the BBC school courses, soon becoming a senior sound engineer in the Light Entertainment department. By 1954 he had become a producer, dealing with music productions that involved the then newly formed BBC Show Band directed by Cyril Stapleton.

Music for Sweethearts was Browell's turning-point, a show which featured Eric Jupp and his Orchestra. Then came *Sing Something Simple* with the Cliff



Browell: self-effacing

Adams Singers - a programme heralded by the somewhat lugubrious voice of Browell himself. The programme is still there on Radio 2, 40 years later, long after Browell's retirement in 1977.

Being a producer in Light Entertainment meant all things from music production through to comedy production, and Browell handled the full range. His music productions, such as many series with Matt Monro, were intermingled with long-running series with Frankie Howard, Tony Hancock, Morecambe and Wise, Spike Milligan, Bertie Reed, Benny Hill, and the original radio series of *The Likely Lads*.

Always self-effacing, John Browell lived for his work in radio. He gave a talk recently to an audience of the Goon Show Preservation Society - full of wonderful reminiscences of the pitfalls that befell producers of that show. He was 79 by then, but he could recall perfectly the momentous occasions throughout those hectic production years.

Brian Willey

John Logan Browell, radio producer; born London 29 June 1917; married 1945 Rita Walker (one son, one daughter); died Watford, Hertfordshire 19 May 1997.

Nguyen Khac Vien

Nguyen Khac Vien was one of the Vietnamese scholars who did most to interpret Vietnam for the West.

The son of a mandarin from central Vietnam, he went to France in 1937 and studied medicine there. By 1947, two years after the declaration of Vietnamese independence by Ho Chi Minh, Vien had joined the French Communist Party. Between 1953 and 1963 he became the leader of the Vietnamese liberation movement in France. In the beginning living clandestinely, travelling round the country talking to Vietnamese in the French army, and persuading them of the importance of supporting the liberation of Vietnam.

By that time, however, he was already suffering from tuberculosis. In 1951, one lung was removed and half another lung was declared useless; he was told that he had two years at most to live. He spent one whole year in a convalescent home without speaking at all and adapted the methods of yoga and traditional exercises to use his lungs as little as possible. His later catchphrase was

"breathe with the stomach". His continuing survival was described by friends in the 1970s as the "third Vietnamese miracle", the first two being the Vietnamese victories over the French and the United States. In 1963, Vien was expelled from France and returned to Vietnam, where he headed the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Hanoi, which published translations of Vietnamese books, novels, a newsletter (the *Vietnam Courier*) and an academic journal, *Vietnamese Studies*. He wrote in



Vien: 'Breathe with the stomach'

French a *History of Vietnam* (1974), which was translated into English, many articles on Vietnamese culture and in 1974 translated the great Vietnamese epic poem of the 18th century, *Kim Van Kieu*, into French. An important work of the publishing house during this period was an anthology of Vietnamese poetry, published in French in three volumes as *Anthologie de la Littérature Vietnamienne* (1973) and in one volume, as *Glimpses of Vietnamese Literature* (1977), in English.

Perhaps Vien's main importance at this time was as an interpreter of Vietnamese history, culture and the Vietnamese struggle to the many intellectuals, militants and journalists sympathetic to Vietnam who visited Hanoi during the Vietnam War. From 1965 to 1975, it was important that his intellectual breadth and learning about Vietnamese history and literature was combined with an openness and understanding of Western society and a not uncritical approach to what might be wrong in Vietnam - bureaucracy, dogmatism. His openness played a

large part in winning American and Western friends for Vietnam's struggle.

In 1981, Vien wrote a seven-point letter to the National Assembly, with a copy to the Minister of Culture (who was in charge of the Foreign Languages Publishing House), profoundly critical of the lack of freedom of expression and of the bureaucratic control of Vietnamese society by the Communist Party, of which he was still a member, and calling for reforms. This letter became famous: news of it soon spread abroad, it was passed from hand to hand and excerpts were quoted by the BBC. With a strong reputation abroad and numerous friends among Westerners who had supported Vietnam in the war, Vien, though officially disapproved of by those he criticised, nevertheless remained untouchable.

In 1983, at the age of 70, Nguyen Khac Vien retired from the publishing house and gave himself up to other pursuits, writing and publishing health, yoga and gymnastic exercises. In 1989 he further stretched the bounds of what

was then permissible in Vietnam by founding probably the first non-governmental organisation in Vietnam - NT, an organisation to carry out research into child psychology, to train child psychologists and psychiatrists, and to help disturbed children. In his very soft, fluent voice he would talk at length, with brilliance and gentle humour; he had time for everyone from distinguished foreign researchers to peasants in from the countryside, and of course, for children. His figure was waith-like; he helped preserve his health by never showing anger or impatience. He opposed bureaucracy but, jokingly putting it into historical and Vietnamese context, he would neither appear angry at bureaucratic stupidity nor give in to it.

Elizabeth Hodgkin

Nguyen Khac Vien, writer and campaigner; born 6 February 1913; Director, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi 1963-83; Grand prix de la Francophonie, Académie Française 1992; married 1966 Nguyen Thi Nhat (one adopted daughter); died 10 May 1997.

Brian Wenham

May 1 add a personal note to Leonard Miall's obituary of Brian Wenham [10 May]. I writes Humphrey Burton. I was a departmental head at BBC TV for close on 10 years, and in my view Brian was the best controller of a splendid

and servant. Like his predecessor, he had a special feeling for classical music and opera. I would often receive enthusiastic calls requesting information about a pianist or a singer he had heard while on his duties overseas. Among his innovations was BBC 2's *Opera Month* in April 1980, which racked up 34 hours of programmes, about the same allocation of time as the snooker which Brian pioneered with equal relish. There were eight full-length operas and a vast

number of documentaries, master classes and workshops. The following year Brian mounted a three-month summer music festival (nowadays BBC TV is in thrall to the Proms). And virtually his last act before quitting the controller-

ship for higher management was to devise a Sunday night placing for Wagner's *Ring* cycle, divided act by act into 10 weekly instalments like an operatic version of *Upstairs and Downstairs*. Given his love for Wagner, it is ironic that, only days before his

death, Brian had booked to visit Bayreuth for the first time. For broadcasters Brian Wenham was both our leader and our friend: his premature departure in 1987 was a serious blow to the BBC; they should never have let him go.

death, Brian had booked to visit Bayreuth for the first time. For broadcasters Brian Wenham was both our leader and our friend: his premature departure in 1987 was a serious blow to the BBC; they should never have let him go.

Brian Willey

John Logan Browell, radio producer; born London 29 June 1917; married 1945 Rita Walker (one son, one daughter); died Watford, Hertfordshire 19 May 1997.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

ARMSTRONG-MORTLOCK: Katherine, Anne, and Michael, 13 May 1997. Beloved husband of Jo and father of Jack, Alex, and Anna. Beloved brother of Charlotte and Preselia. Enquiries to W.G. Miller, 0171-236 3588. Memorial service to be notified.

DEATHS

CHENEY TRENCHE: Richard Hugh Robert, died suddenly, 18 May 1997. Beloved husband of Jo and father of Jack, Alex, and Anna. Beloved brother of Charlotte and Preselia. Enquiries to W.G. Miller, 0171-236 3588. Memorial service to be notified.

For Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS please telephone 0171-293 2011 or fax 0171-293 2010.

Birthdays

Mr James Amoss, actor, 74; M Jacques Bergerac, actor, 70; Miss Helena Bonham-Carter, actress, 31; Miss Zola Budd, athlete, 31; Mr Jeremy Corbyn MP, 48; Mr Roy Donnic, actor, 72; Sir David English, editor-in-chief and chairman, Associated Newspapers, 66; Mrs Judith Goodland, Headmistress, Wycombe Abbey School, 59; Mr Anthony Greener, chief executive and chairman, Guinness, 57; Sir Douglas Hardie, politician, Edward Parker & Co, 74; Sir Kenneth Jones, former High Court judge, 76; Sir Patrick Kingsley, former Keeper of the Records, Duchy of Cornwall, 98; Miss Peggy Lee, singer, 77; Mr Alec McCowen, actor, 72; Professor William McHardy, former Regius Professor of Hebrew, Oxford University, 86; Lord Mayfield, former Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 76; Mr Michael Penfold, former Secretary of State for Defence, 44; Mr David

Prichard, Headmaster, Wyldcliffe College, 63; Mr Anthony Quick, former Headmaster, Bradford College, 73; Sir Colin Sampson, former HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, 68; Lord Stevens of Ludgate, chairman, United News and Media, and Express Newspapers, 61; Wing Commander Sir Kenneth Stoddart, former Lord-Lieutenant of Merseyside, 83; Mr Glenn Turner, cricketer, 50; Air Marshal Sir John Walker, 61; Mr Roger Westbrook, ambassador to Portugal, 56.

Anniversaries

Births: Charles, Duc d'Orléans, poet, 1391; Jacopo da Carrara, painter, 1494; Philippe de Champaigne, painter, 1602; Sir Harry Vane, statesman, 1613; Sir William Peller, economist, 1623; John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, military commander, 1650; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, writer, 1689; Pierre Garinac, violinist and com-

poser, 1728; Joseph Drechsler, conductor, organist and composer, 1782; Sir Thomas Noon Talford, judge and author, 1795; Edmond Louis-Antoine Huet de Gontcourt, novelist, 1822; Sir Hubert von Herkomer, painter, 1849; Princess Mary of Teck (Queen Mary, consort of King George VI), 1867; Henry Farman, aircraft designer, 1874; Al Johnson (Asa Yoelson), singer and entertainer, 1886; Sir Eugene Aynesley Goossens, composer and conductor, 1893; John Wayne (Marion Michael Morrison), actor, 1907; Robert Morley, actor and playwright, 1908; Sir Matt (Matthew) Busby, football manager, 1909; Desires: St Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury, 604; Samuel Pepps, diarist, 1703; Thomas Southcote, playwright, 1746; Jacques Lafite, banker and politician, 1844; Vissarion Grigorievich Belinsky, critic, 1848; John Curwen, music educator, 1880; Sir Edward Sabine, astronomer, 1883; Jean-Joseph Ben-jamin Constant, painter, 1902; Ernest

Solvay, industrial chemist, 1922; Charles Horace Mayo, surgeon, 1922; Victor Herbert, composer, 1924; Lincoln Ellsworth, polar explorer, 1951; Wilbur Daniel Steele, short-story writer, 1970; Jacques Lipchitz, sculptor and poet, 1973; George Brent (George Bradno Nolan), actor, 1979. On this day the Pequot Indian stronghold in Connecticut was destroyed by a force led by Captain John Mason, 1637; King Charles II landed at Dover, 1660; the Battle of Tara was fought, 1798; Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned King of Italy in Milan Cathedral, 1805; the wild boy Kaspar Hauser was discovered in the market-place of Nuremberg, 1828; the Russian army defeated the Poles following their revolt, Ostrolenka, 1831; the Confederate Army surrendered in Texas, so ending the American Civil War, 1865; in the United States, President Johnson proclaimed an amnesty to all Confederate States, 1865; Michael Baricci, a Fenian terrorist, was

hanged for causing an explosion and 13 deaths - Britain's last public execution, 1868; Mount Etna in Sicily started a series of violent eruptions, 1871; Vauxhall Bridge, London, was opened, 1896; Emily Duncan, the first woman magistrate in Britain, was appointed a Justice of the Peace, 1913; in South Africa, a Nationalist government was elected with apartheid policies, 1948; Guyana became independent, 1966; an Icelandic gunboat shelled and holed a British trawler, 1973. Today is the Feast Day of St Dyfan, St Lambert of Venice, St Mariana of Quilo, St Philip Nori, St Priscus or Prix of Auxerre and St Quadratus of Athens.

Luncheons

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Mr Robin Cook MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, held a luncheon on Saturday at 1 Carlton Gardens, Lon-

don SW1, in honour of Mr Yukihiko Ikeda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Royal Society

The following have been elected Fellows of the Royal Society:

Dr Christopher Michael Barr; Professor John Michael Brady; Dr Michael George Outman; Professor John Beaman; Professor Richard Dickinson; Professor Colin Clark; Professor David Charles; Professor Laurence Eaves; Dr Richard Alan Foray; Professor Christopher David Garner; Professor Douglas Owen Gould; Dr Edward John Hinch; Professor James Julian Bennett Jack.

Professor Paul Gordon Jarvis; Professor Charles Kuo; Dr Eric Barnington Ker; Professor Philip Joseph Koonen; Professor Peter Benedict Kronheimer; Dr Barbara Marshall; Professor Timothy John Mitchell; Professor Richard Graham Michael Morris; Professor Christopher Miles; Professor George Richard Palmer; Dr George Henry Poste; Professor Kenneth Bacon; Professor Maud Reid. Professor Alan Bernard Richmond; Professor Leo Sachs; Professor Giacinto Scalone.

Professor James Scott; Professor Wilson Sibbett; Professor Bernard Walter Silverman; Sir Richard Sykes; Professor Richard Edgar Taylor; Professor Neil Sidney Tralanger; Professor Robin Anthony White; Dr Simon David Manton White; Professor Alan Hardwick; Professor Graham Charles Wood; Dr Richard Owen White. Foreign Members: Professor Thomas Charles; Professor Walter Jakob Gehring; Professor Roy Jay Glauber; Professor Martin David Kruskal; Professor George Andrew Olate; Professor Stanley Ben Zvi.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Prince of Wales attends a service in Canterbury Cathedral to celebrate the 1,000th anniversary of the mission of St Augustine to England and the foundation of Canterbury Cathedral. Princess Alexandra, accompanied by Sir Angus Ogilvy, begins an official visit to Japan.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. The 1st Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Wales mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Coldstream Guards.

Middell status

Britain should move itself on California

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DEPUTY BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: MICHAEL HARRISON

Liddell sows doubts over Bank's status as lender of last resort

Michael Harrison

There was mounting confusion yesterday over whether the Bank of England would lose its status as lender of last resort as part of the Chancellor's sweeping changes to the way the City is regulated.

Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, indicated the role might be assumed by the new all-powerful Securities and Investments Board when it takes over the Bank's supervisory responsibilities.

However, senior Treasury sources insisted the Bank would continue to play a "critical role" in overseeing the financial stability of the banking system.

Responding to weekend reports that the Bank would lose its status as lender of last resort, Mrs Liddell said: "The reason we are flagging up this issue so early is because we want to consult as widely as possible and bring people along with us. It is something we have to take the advice of the Bank and Treasury officials on."

She pointed out, however, that even now the Bank's ability to act as lender of last resort was limited and that it did not have the resources to bail out a big bank. Speaking en route to Paris for today's OECD meeting, she said: "If there

was a major banking crash now involving a high street clearer, say, then the reality is the state would have to be involved."

Bank officials accept that in many instances the Treasury would be the de facto lender of last resort. The Bank performed this function after the collapse of Johnson Matthey Bankers in the 1980s and the National Mortgage Bank but it would not have been able to act as lender of last resort if it had been deemed necessary to rescue Barings which crashed with debts of £800m.

What the Bank is more concerned about, however, is where lines of responsibility will lie when the SuperSIB is up and running, which body takes the lead role in deciding whether or not the collapse of a bank carries a systemic risk to the banking system and who decides whether it needs to be bailed out.

The answer appears to be that the beefed-up SIB, to be run by the present Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, Howard Davies, will be responsible for the prudential supervision of banks. But if the stability or liquidity of the banking system is threatened or there is a risk of "contagion" from one bank failing, it will be the responsibility of the Bank, in consultation with the Government and the SuperSIB.



Helen Liddell: 'If there was a banking crash now involving a high street clearer the state would have to be involved'

While this is welcome news for the Bank after the way its regulatory functions were removed without consultation last week, some observers question how comfortably this would sit with the loss of its role as lender of last resort.

Both the Bank and the Treasury

are still recovering from the handling of last week's announcement that the Bank was to lose its responsibility for banking supervision. The climate of uncertainty was not helped by suggestions from "senior Treasury ministers" that Mr George had "played into our

hands" by confiding he thought about resigning over the move.

The remark, apparently designed to undermine Mr George and force him out, enraged a number of senior City figures, including the chairman of NatWest, Lord Alexander. Martin Taylor, chief executive of Bar-

clays, is also thought to have been angered. However, relations between the Bank and Treasury were patched after Mr Brown's economic policy adviser, Ed Balls, met the Government for lunch last Friday. The two are said to have emerged smiling and harmonious.

Budget delay as Chancellor weighs options

By our financial staff

Gordon Brown's first Budget is not now expected before 1 July as speculation mounts about the extent of the package the new Chancellor intends to put before Parliament. Treasury sources yesterday dismissed reports that the Budget timing had been delayed by problems with the windfall tax the Government is committed to introduce.

But it is possible that some of the delay is being caused by debate about the Budget's scale and scope and whether it should go beyond the windfall tax and the reduction of VAT on domestic fuel to take in changes in personal and corporate tax allowances which could set more revenue for the Treasury.

Mr Brown is thought to have planned originally on a 10 June Budget although no date was ever confirmed by the Treasury.

Sir Leo Brittan, vice president of the European Commission, yesterday gave a strong indication that getting the detail of the windfall tax right was causing at least some of the delay in the Budget timing.

Asked whether a challenge to the windfall tax could succeed in the European Court of Justice, he told GMTV's Sunday programme yesterday: "I myself think it depends entirely on how the tax is phrased and how it's

couched. And it may be that some of the delays and hesitations in announcing the Budget date are precisely because people are trying to work out a way of doing it which won't fall foul of European law, so it does depend on the small print."

No delay will be caused by the audit of the Treasury books by Sir John Bourn, head of the National Audit Office. The NAO has been asked to check assumptions and forecasts made by the Treasury under Kenneth Clarke, the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, on issues such as growth and unemployment.

Because the current parliamentary session will not be broken in the autumn there would be no time constraint on a heavy budgetary Finance Bill requiring a limited number of measures. However, there is Whitehall speculation that while Mr Brown is ambitious to cram as much as possible into his early Budget, getting any painful tax increases out of the way early, Tony Blair is hostile to any tax increases at all.

The Institute of Directors yesterday gave its backing to the phased abolition of mortgage interest tax relief. In its summer Budget submission the IoD called for a modest fiscal tightening to "fine tune" growth but said the Chancellor should resist a large increase in taxes.

Britain 'should model itself on California'

Tony Blair should model the British economy not on that of Germany, Japan or one of the Asian tigers but on California, the US state that swept Ronald Reagan to power, according to a study published today by left-of-centre think-tank Demos, writes Michael Harrison.

The study by journalist Charles Leadbeater argues that traditional economic role models advocated by stakeholder economists such as Will Hutton and John Kay are outdated or inappropriate for Britain.

A far better role model, he says, is the West Coast of Amer-

ica, which has become one of the most dynamic economies in the world on the back of knowledge-based and high-technology industries. With a GDP of about \$800bn and a workforce of 14 million, California is not dissimilar in size and structure to the UK.

Although it has high levels of unemployment, inequality and crime, it has restructured away from industries such as defence and aerospace and into computer services, multi-media, design and biotechnology. 'Britain: The California of Europe', Demos, £2.95

BA in talks to buy Italian airline

Anthony O'Connor and Michael Harrison

British Airways is in talks to acquire the Italian airline, Air One, in a deal which would expand its European operations and bring it into head-on competition in the Italian domestic market with the state-owned carrier, Alitalia.

Although BA's chief executive, Bob Ayling, refused to comment last week, the talks are at an advanced stage, according to senior management sources at the airline.

Air One is 98 per cent owned by the Italian construction magnate Carlo Tota. The low-cost

carrier began domestic operations in November 1995 and has since picked up a near 30 per cent share of the Rome-Milan route. It is due to launch a new service from Rome Milate airport to Stansstad in co-operation with Air UK at the end of this month. It has a fleet of six Boeing 737s and two McDonnell Douglas aircraft.

If the deal comes off it will have serious implications for Alitalia, which is awaiting European Commission approval for a 3,000bn lira injection of state aid to help it restructure.

BA already has a foothold in Germany and France through its subsidiary airlines Deutsche BA,

TAT and Air Liberté. Two years ago it held talks about entering the Italian market through a franchising deal with Meridiana, which is owned by the Aga Khan and based in Sardinia.

"If you compare the Italian and French markets, TAT is like Meridiana and Air Liberté is like Air One," said one source. "BA has encountered some difficulties with its acquisitions in France and Germany and it is for this reason that Air One is a perfect acquisition because it is a low-cost carrier."

A decision on Alitalia's state-aid application is not expected until the end of July. BA has protested strongly against the air-

line being given further support along with Lufthansa, British Midland and Virgin Express.

Losses from Deutsche BA rose last year due to restructuring costs, a declining air traffic market and the weakening of the German mark against sterling. Despite this, Deutsche BA gained market share on domestic routes, launching services from Munich to Hamburg and Cologne and also began flights from Germany to Gatwick.

TAT, meanwhile, more than halved its operating losses as passenger numbers increased by a third on domestic routes and by a fifth on services to Heathrow and Gatwick.

Co-op trading profit hit by competition

The overall trading profit of the Co-operative movement fell from £160m to £136m last year, the first decline since 1989, members were told yesterday at its annual congress in Cardiff.

The fall was blamed on increased retail competition. Turnover rose 2 per cent to just under £2bn while membership increased by 136,000 to 9.1 million and reserves rose 2.6 per cent to £1.2bn.

Despite the downturn in trading profit, the congress was told that many regional and locally based societies had achieved

healthy increases in both turnover and profitability. The Co-op is the country's biggest retailer with more than 4,500 outlets ranging from hypermarkets and supermarkets to chemists and shoe chains, funeral parlours and travel shops.

In the core food business there was no increase in sales while non-food Co-op businesses only achieved a 2 per cent improvement.

However, travel income was up by 9 per cent and motors by 12 per cent while the funeral business increased turnover by 4 per cent.

BUSINESS TO BUSINESS

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back page

The visitors greet authors, chatter, read magazines, eat sheep's milk ice-cream or loll around. But why does nobody seem to read any books?

Meeting Hay while the sun shines

Located between the Chelsea Flower Show and the first day of Ascot races, the Hay Literary Festival is an unusual event in the English season: it takes place some 150 miles from London with no sporting connection, no special clothing requirements and no fenced-off enclosure to divide the nobles from the slob – unless you count the tiny writers' eating area where free wine and indifferent pork korma is dished out to starving artists by a saturnine maitre d' called Fernando. But the festival, run by Peter Florence and his family (his father Norman, whose idea the festival was, died at Christmas) has up-scaled itself over the past few years, from a book event in a field to a vertiginously trendy transmedial extravaganza.

Book festivals have become a wildly successful spin-off from the activity formerly known as "reading". Every self-respecting city in Great Britain will soon have its own festival, following the example of Brighton, Salisbury, Swansea and Edinburgh.

Hay is by no means the best established festival in the country (that's Cheltenham), but it achieves something to which other festivals aspire. It pulls in a huge audience from miles out of town. For 10 days in May, the Premier League of London media-land hurls up the M4 to this small market town on the cusp of Herefordshire and Wales. They come to be quartered at the impossibly ritzy Llanged Hall, home of the late Laura Ashley, where the playwright Arthur Miller once stayed a weekend without realising it was a commercial operation; or at the Swan Hotel, the Baskerville Arms (just as chilling as the name suggests) or in one of the ancient cottages tucked away at the end of crazily serpentine narrow lanes. A familiar sound in mid-May is that of braying sociable voices, redolent of Holland Park and Primrose Hill, begging suspicious Black Mountains farmers to help them find their way home across the freezing lunar landscape of Capel-y-ffin.

Nobody can satisfactorily explain why thousands of rational people should travel huge distances to hear writers, the most solitary of professional people, discuss their creations, opinions and regimens, and read to people perfectly capable of reading to themselves. But they come in waves, packing out the Carlton marquee to watch Sir Roy Strong (a lugubrious vision in



John Walsh
at the
Literary Festival
in Hay-on-Wye

dove-grey double breasted suit and matching ash-blond pompadour) read snatches of mild gossip about Mrs Thatcher, Cecil Beaton and the Royal Family ("I said to the Queen, 'Thank you for knocking me, ma'am. It's quite a safe line, isn't it?'"). The crowd in the tents greet every tiny vignette as if comes from Asprey's.

For the writers, it's an opportunity to clap eyes on the people at whom they supposedly aim their books. If every author writes with a single perfect reader in mind, how piquant to discover him or her, made flesh, in a tent in Powys. It can sometimes be a bit of a shock.

At Hay, Martin Amis introduces his new novel, *Night Train*, to a sell-out tent of admirers. At the end he is asked by a lady in the crowd: "Why do modern novelists write about

such disgusting subjects?" He looks puzzled. "The world is full of joy too, you know," she assures him, a rare note of positive thinking in literary circles. "I've never been offered that opinion on the modern novel before," Amis growls. "I'm quite wrong-footed."

Ian McEwan, after reading from his latest novel, *Enduring Love*, is asked questions about his earlier book, *The Child in Time*, by readers who have studied it on the school syllabus. "I'm very happy to get a new slice, every year, of a new generation of readers," he says. "I just wonder about the ones who write to the author asking him to write their essays for them..."

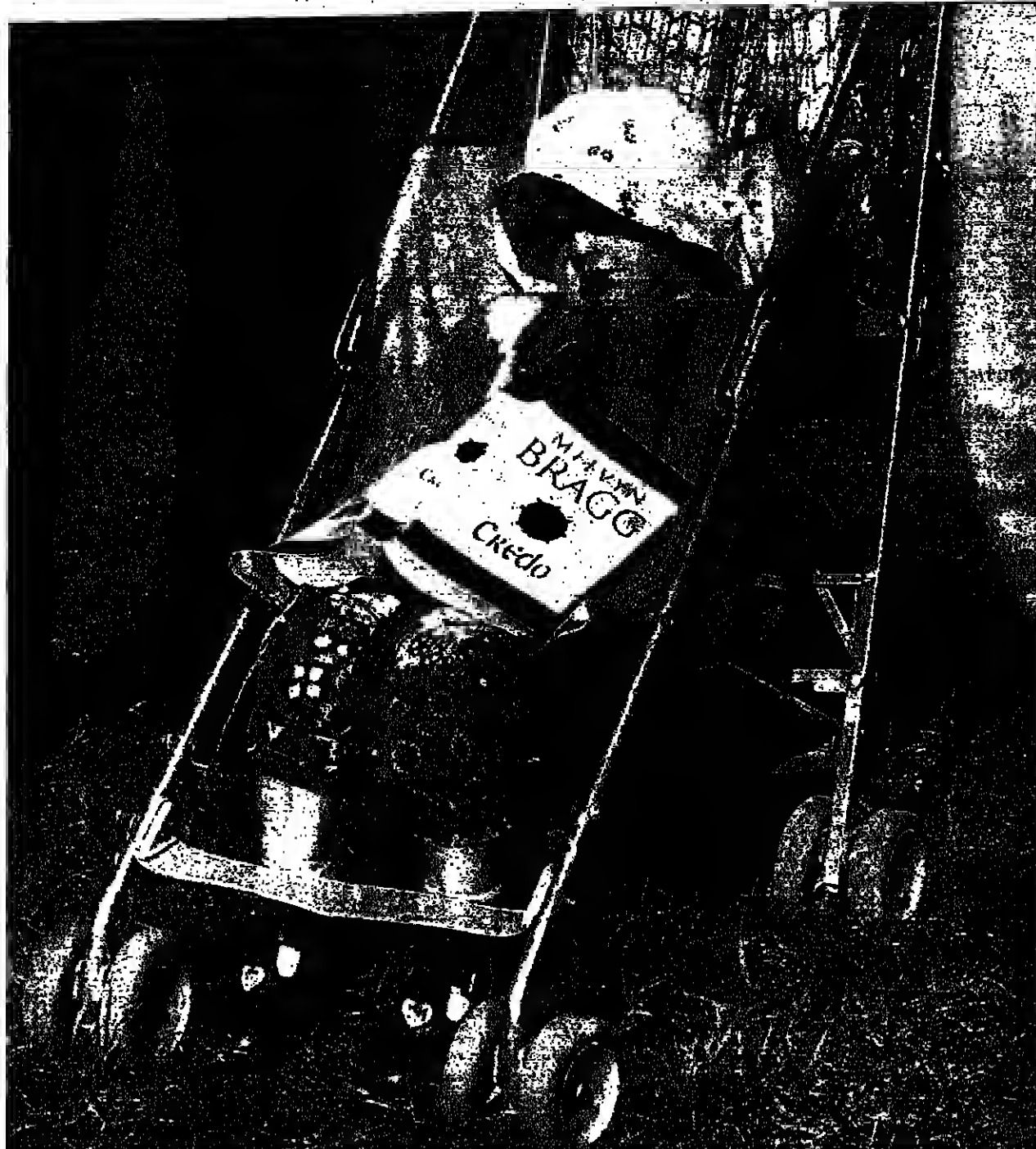
The Chilean dramatist Ariel Dorfman, of *Death and the Maiden* fame, who is here to deliver a lecture on "Making the Dead Speak" in celebration of the 25th birthday of

Index On Censorship, is introduced by his fellow dramatist Harold Pinter, who reads selected monologues from his plays, "and gradually becomes the characters. I like the way he never explains anything, he gives no quarter". At one poignant moment, Pinter listens to a burst of laughter from the next marquee, where Armando Iannucci is being satirical, and says sadly, "Of course, I'd never get that response." This despite the audience's reaction to his description of his role as a conscientious objector in 1948. "Nobody liked me for it," he says. "But I stuck to my guns."

As Dorfman goes off to watch a stand-up gig by Ardal O'Hanlon, the Irish actor best known as Dougal in *Father Ted* (literary festivals are probably the only occasions at which you get such a convergence of low and high brows under the same roof), the hot ticket for party literati is Brenda Maddox's place. The biographer of DH Lawrence and WB Yeats, she and her husband, the scientist Sir John Maddox, (ex-editor of *Nature* magazine), live in a cottage of staggering antiquity, tucked snugly into the hillside beyond Llysven.

Beside the Maddoxes' giant fireplaces and bang-your-head oaken beams, Gerald Kaufman MP rubs shoulders with Brian Patten, the corkscrew-haired, schoolboyish Liverpool poet, and the *Spectator's* PJ Kavanagh. Brenda's daughter Bronwyn, now Washington bureau chief of *The Times*, explains her earlier trauma of having to explain to 150 aspirant psychotherapists that the man they had come to see, Adam Phillips, would not now be appearing since, in changing trains, he had inadvertently caught one going back to London – thus pitching the tent into a fever of pop psychological speculation. (He is not the only no-show. Shimon Peres, the former prime minister of Israel, has also pulled out. His excuse – the forthcoming Israeli general election – is considered pretty pathetic by everyone.)

Also at Ms Maddox's is the festival's one-time most outspoken opponent, Richard Booth, once the self-styled don – thus pitching the tent into a fever of pop psychological speculation. (He is not the only no-show. Shimon Peres, the former prime minister of Israel, has also pulled out. His excuse – the forthcoming Israeli general election – is considered pretty pathetic by everyone.)



One of the festival's younger critics finds Melvyn Bragg's latest less than captivating

Photographs: Christopher Jones

meekly accepts invitations to join in.

The arrival of the other great media politician of the moment (Kaufman aside) is signalled by a blaze of white suits. Martin Bell spends perhaps too long complaining about the iniquities of Neil Hamilton and, more specifically, Hamilton's wife Christine, whom Bell clearly regards as more terrifying than any wild-eyed Bosnian paramilitary armed with an AK47. "When we had the encounter on the beach at Taiton I thought I had lost the election. I had no idea what to say to them," he says.

But his genuinely worst moment as a journalist, he reveals, was at one of Idi Amin's weddings when the great Ugandan dictator was marrying one "Lady Sarah" from something called the Mechanised Suicide Unit. After pressing Amin for a rare interview, and securing one, he filed it to London with immense difficulty over two days – only to discover it had been dropped in favour of a story about swans dying on the River Thames.

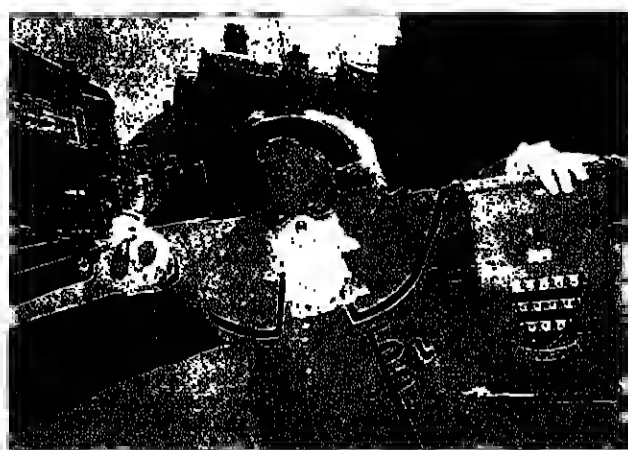
Mid-afternoon on a blazing Sunday, one wonders if this can be the point of literature.

Resting between events 100 people loll in the garden formed by the perimeter of tents, licking sheep's milk ice-cream, reading magazines, and working on an early tan. Signings in the book tent are brisk but no one seems to be reading any hooks. It's a very British way of enjoying the secrets of the intellect.

Everyone knows that the most popular draw for bookish crowds is Alan Bennett. Behind him, though, comes Bill Bryson, the droll American travel writer, who is on stage tonight. It's a sell-out, and for the first time the

organisers are worried about ticket touts: "And we have the St John Ambulance Brigade on stand-by for the Ralph Fiennes event on Tuesday," a woman tells me.

Well, well – you look around at the huge tents, the Portaloos, the queues, the Jeep Honchos in the car park, the Winnachagos in the field, the ranks of massive telephoto lenses, the hotline faxes, and the whole panoply of media meltdown in the midst of these immemorial hills and valleys, and you wonder: can it be that literature on stage is the new rock'n'roll?



Hay's town crier speaks up for the written word

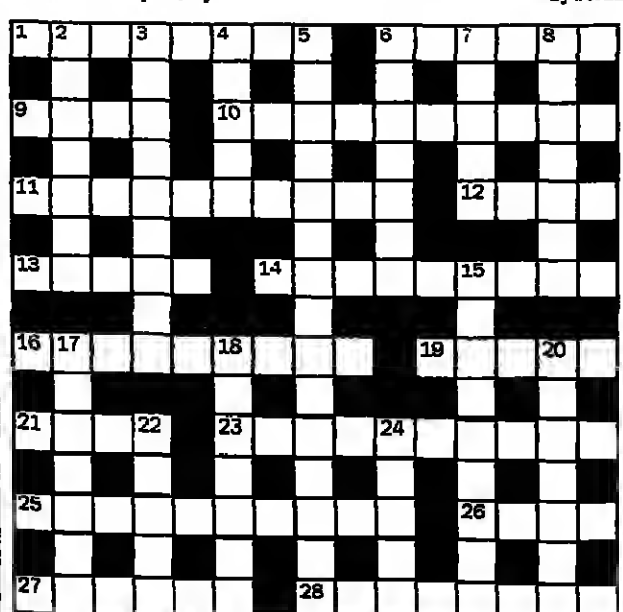


Thirst edition: Martin Amis autographs a fan's purchase

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3268, Monday 26 May

By Portia



ACROSS
1 Sex appeal between companions – a tense source of gossip (8)
6 Lacking substance he isn't of any importance (6)
9 Female singer's eager to make come back (4)
10 One involved in treating mum's heart condition (10)

11 Not up to scratch thus producing stress (10)
12 Hour before reaching this place (4)
13 Said to have hung around grave (5)
14 A style was unusual, at any rate (9)
16 Doesn't matter so much to very many (9)
19 Passion engulfs British character (5)
21 Staunch supporter (4)

23 Responsible for worker being late (10)
25 Toy that gives one a buzz? (7-3)
26 Composer exists but is short of money (4)
27 Kind of melody (6)
28 He praises European's record investment in Scottish island (8)

DOWN

2 Shock controller (7)
3 Actor at Reading's in trouble (9)
4 God from ancient Egypt author used (5)
5 What bothers Pete about those in authority (3,6,4,2)
6 Issue second part of the Bible (7)
7 Cricketer's honour means a lot (5)
8 Naval ship without hesitation makes for wreck (7)
15 Heard anticipating extra living allowance (9)
17 Covering charge accepted without question (2,5)
18 The French soon capture key state (7)
20 Field beans, perhaps (7)
22 Child's mother grabbing black snake (5)
24 Quarter take off going over to Latin country (5)



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